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# An investigation into the relationship between self-esteem and patriarchal and feminist attitudes of Protestant women seminarians and lay women regarding selected Biblical passages and Christian theological constructs.

Barbara H. Nielsen

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
SELF-ESTEEM AND PATRIARCHAL AND FEMINIST ATTITUDES OF  
PROTESTANT WOMEN SEMINARIANS AND LAY WOMEN REGARDING  
SELECTED BIBLICAL PASSAGES AND  
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS

A Dissertation Presented

by

BARBARA H. NIELSEN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2000

Counseling Psychology Program

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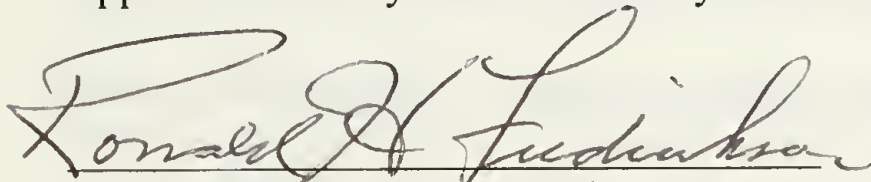
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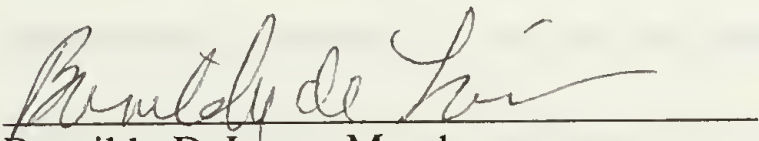
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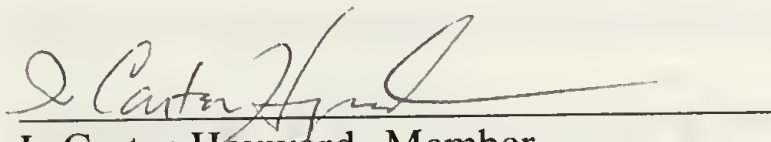
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The birth and life of this dissertation is due to the infinite faithfulness of my committee and friends. In the beginning, it represented a task I set before myself long before I entered this doctoral program. As my life path opened before me and the revelations pointed me in my particular direction, I knew that I needed to give back to my sisters and brothers in Christ in a conscious way, some of the learnings I have had about our true identities as women....some conscious way that might enlighten their journeys to health and wholeness. I have sought to do this in loving memory of all who have enlightened me on my journey to health and wholeness.

It has been a long and arduous journey, filled with all the pain and joy of creating new life from the old, the way through which all of us must pass. I have indeed been blessed with a superb committee, each of whom has been on the fore front of this journey.....ever there guiding, supporting, sustaining and encouraging me in my appointed task, each using their special gifts and talents of nurturance and generativity to enable this work to be birthed. To my chairperson, Dr. Ronald Fredrickson, for his acute judgement on the overview and his dedicated faithfulness in making the difficult seem easy and the interminable come into fruition; to Dr. Brunilda DeLeon for her unfailing feminist intelligence and her patient persistence in moving me beyond every troublesome block; to Dr. Carol Zaleski for her quiet understanding of the power emanating from the psychological and spiritual confluence implicit in this work; to The Rev. Dr. Carter Heyward for her tireless reading and reworking of the feminist theological principles explicit in this research; and finally to



Dr. Ena Nuttal, without whose continuous vigilance to the process of my development as a scholar this project would not have come into being...to each of you goes my deepest gratitude for all you have given.

There are myriad others to whom I am indebted also; to Dr. John Houlihan under whose clear perceptions the statistical analysis of the data came to life; to my dear and faithful friends, Dr. Norah Lusignan and Dr. Barbara Morrill, both of whom while treading the path of completing their own doctoral dissertations, ever inspired me to push on to finish mine; to my Spiritual Director, Ms. Ellen Tadd, for her sure and steady discernment of God's purposes for this work as my unique contribution of service in the world; to all the many talented and able women who have collected, designed, typed, edited, filed, collated and in every way birthed this project into life with their thousands of hours of excellent, skilled abilities; to all those whose energy and enthusiasm coalesced the community of seminarians and parishioners from whom the data was collected; and finally, to all the 156 of the faithful who gave of themselves by volunteering to take the protocol and whose attitudes comprise the data of this research. To all of you who have brought your light and love to this work goes my deepest thanks and appreciation for sharing the journey with me. And of course in the end, all praise and thanks goes to the Spirit who shines in and through each of us, enabling us to use this opportunity to grow more fully into health, wholeness and happiness.

## ABSTRACT

# AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND PATRIARCAL AND FEMINIST ATTITUDES OF PROTESTANT WOMEN SEMINARIANS AND LAY WOMEN REGARDING SELECTED BIBLICAL PASSAGES AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS

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This study investigates the relationship between Christian women's self-esteem, spiritual well-being, and feminist/patriarchal attitudes as well as knowledge regarding selected Biblical passages and theological constructs that speak to the women's role.

Participants were 78 women seminarians and 78 women parishioners from main line Protestant denominations in urban and suburban New England. Each was given four questionnaires: The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, The Christian Women's Attitude Scale, The Spiritual Well-Being Scale, and Knowledge of Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale. The questionnaires were administered in groups to



insure procedural standardization. Responses were anonymous; all individual responses were pooled.

Statistically significant correlations show women in this study with more knowledge of feminist Biblical analysis, have more feminist attitudes regarding the measured passages and constructs and higher levels of all-over self-esteem, particularly perceived self-image, self-acceptance, personal worth, personal adequacy and self-evaluation of their personality.

Also these women have a higher sense of moral worth, physical and emotional independence, openness and greater capacity for self-criticism.

These women also show higher levels of belief in women and men sharing equal authority, that God's nature has both masculine and feminine attributes, that women and men share equal responsibility for sin, and that women should value their physical selves, their sexuality and their beauty.

Conversely, the data demonstrates that women with higher patriarchal attitudes have lower capacity for normal, healthy openness and self-criticism and lower personal self-worth.

Puzzling data shows women holding more feminist attitudes and seeing themselves equal with men as well as women higher on patriarchal attitudes and lower on physical and emotional independence both have a significantly higher sense of religious and existential spiritual well-being.

Finally, comparing differences between parishioners and seminarians, parishioners have more adequacy, worth and value as family members, while

seminarians have more spiritual and religious well-being, more knowledge of measured passages and constructs, and more feminist attitudes about them, particularly regarding female authority and feminine and masculine qualities of God.



## PREFACE

This research project was conceived out of the pain and anguish of my own and my sisters' journey to wholeness in feminist theological studies and the practices of the Church. The initiating shock was the realization that the Church that all at once nourished and urged our growth into womanhood, was at the same time denying us our call to priesthood and therefore, in the larger dimension, to a full life in Christ. This realization destroyed forever the illusion that woman's personhood could grow and flower within a patriarchal cultural and androcentric theological structure.

The crucial question is how can women and men who accept the promise of liberation deal with the Bible and the Church today in the light of its patriarchal tradition and the rising feminist consciousness. I take the position supported by the data in this study that as women's self-concept evolves to include the knowledge that we are created equal to men, our self-esteem has a good probability of rising and our mental and emotional health of becoming richly enhanced. If we are to include women in the total picture, we are called to rethink how we interpret everything. As women evolve into this new equality consciousness, many will be confused and uncertain regarding their self-concept. Those of us who are particularly interested in our relationship with God will be more confused when we look at entirely androcentric interpretations of Biblical passages. My hope is that by drawing a feminist consciousness into our Biblical analysis, religious and spiritual women will continue to feel the powerful effects of the Jewish-Christian tradition on the whole of

their lives and continue to dynamically activate their total personalities in a revolutionary manner.

The basic question for Christians, therefore, is, "What is a correct interpretation of God's creative plan for relationships between men and women, our culture, the world and the universe? Is the patriarchal tradition, which places women in a subordinate position to men a correct interpretation or has that been imposed upon the Biblical texts, the interpretation and selection of various different texts upon which a great deal of preaching and teaching has ensued? Is, in fact, the message of the Bible one of liberation for all people, women included, or are women to remain in the subordinate position to men that has been the traditional understanding they have been told by church leaders in an androcentric and patriarchal age is the rightful place in which God has placed them? How does this choice affect their self-esteem?"

The statistical findings in this research study may contribute to a deeper understanding of these various passages that speak to the role of women and may be helpful for women regarding what they choose to believe in this time of confusion and re-evaluation.

When all positions are considered, perhaps we can agree only that the Spirit of God is breaking through into the consciousness of many people in this new age of awareness and doing a new thing (Isaiah 43:19). If this is so, as I believe it is, then our only task is to discern whether it be truth or not. Here the challenge of noting the fruits becomes crucial. It is at this point that I humbly offer the fruits of my eight year labor to compress these questions into the methodology of Western scientific psychological procedure. As dramatic as this study's findings are in regard to higher



self-esteem among women who have studied feminist theology and who hold feminist attitudes, the heart of the matter lies within the essence of every woman and man who opens themselves to the truth of God's vision for the human community.

As paradigms of that which we hold to be God's truth burst, die, and are reborn within the consciousness of the human community, there is a realness about the loss that precedes the change. Let us meet this with compassion within ourselves and others. And if we do, in the end, I believe that we shall know that new life will come within our hearts and minds in accordance with the greater purposes for each of us and for the whole world - a new life, which, I believe this research, at best, will support for the eventual greater good of all, and, at least, brings the good news of the possibility of greater self-esteem now for those women who have ears to hear.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. CWAS - Christian Women's Attitude Scale
2. SWBS - Spiritual Well-Being Scale
3. TSCS - Tennessee Self-Concept Scale
4. BPTC - Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale



## CHAPTER 1

### PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH PAPER AND ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

The purpose of this research study is to investigate whether there is a relationship between women's measured self-esteem and their attitudes regarding a number of Biblical texts and Christian theological constructs that speak to the role of women. My interest in doing this research project was to inquire as to what ways Christian Biblical and theological tradition has influenced women's self-esteem. Protestant women from main-line traditions were included in this study, both those who had completed at least one year of seminary and those involved in parishes.

I have chosen to focus my inquiry on a selection of Biblical passages and theological constructs which a number of feminists regard as particularly troublesome to women's self-concept. These passages and constructs either implicitly and explicitly place women in a subordinate position to men or they have been interpreted throughout the tradition in ways that devalue women. In contrast, I am also drawing on texts, theological constructs and feminist reconstructions that either implicitly or explicitly place women and men in equal positions to one another. (Christ & Plaskow, 1979; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1983, 1984; Flanagan, 1985; Fox, 1983; Harrington, 1984; Higgins, 1976; Miller, J.W., 1986 ; Mollenkott, 1983; Phillips, 1984; Plaskow & Christ, 1989; Rogers, 1966; Ruether, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1989; Russell, 1985; Sakenfeld, 1985; Slee, 1985; Suchocki, 1983; Thistlethwaite, 1984, 1991; Tribble, 1973, 1978, 1984, 1985; Zikmund, 1985).

The problem of women's low self-esteem has drawn a great deal of attention. A number of psychological studies indicate that women's self-esteem is generally lower than men's (Frank, Towell, et al., 1985; Long, 1986). Some clinicians assert that women's low self-esteem lies at the basis of many pathological conditions such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, to name only a few (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983; Sanford & Donovan, 1984; Small et al., 1980). The question I am asking in this study is which of the Biblical passages and theological constructs that I have chosen to focus on have a positive effect and which have a negative effect on Christian women's self-esteem, and does a feminist reconstruction of some of the androcentric and patriarchal Biblical texts promote a positive effect on these women's self-esteem?

The problem for many Christian women is that the Bible was both written and canonized in a patriarchal, androcentric culture in which men defined women's lives. As a result there are texts and reflections on those texts that promote the subordination of women and, hence, contribute to women's low self-esteem. A number of feminist theologians (Christ & Plaskow, 1979; Ruether, 1984; Russell, 1985; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1983; Tribble, 1978) have focused on the problems concerning the Bible and Biblical interpretation and are seeking to develop a feminist Biblical hermeneutic, that is, a theory, method, or perspective for understanding and interpretation. In the struggle of many Christian women for a wholesome sense of self-identity in a patriarchal society and Church, Schüssler Fiorenza (1983) believes the authority of the Bible has been used both to legitimize second-class status as well as a primary resource for courage, hope, and commitment in this struggle. The task

of these feminist theologians is to understand and interpret the Bible in such a way that both its oppressive and liberating power are clearly recognized.

In part of this paper I will outline for psychologists, psychotherapists, counselors, pastors, preachers, and teachers of religious matters what the content of some of the Scriptural passages and theological constructs is that these feminist theologians have sought to reinterpret using a feminist hermeneutic and to discuss these in relationship to issues of women's self-esteem. In this way, I hope to put at my reader's disposal the aspects of a traditional androcentric interpretation alongside a feminist reconstruction. My expectation is that those concerned with the spiritual and psychological health and well-being of Christian women may become more aware of the psychological conditioning which religious women clients and parishioners have received from the Christian teachings and how these teachings relate to women's self-esteem.

#### Relevance of this Research for Psychotherapists, Clergy, Psychologists, and Those Teaching Religious Subjects

Why should health care providers be concerned with a client's spiritual or religious concerns? Isn't it far more prudent to leave these matters quite separate from the therapeutic setting? Certainly for some it will be wiser to sidestep or frankly avoid spiritual and religious issues, while for others having some facility with them may seem helpful.

At this point it may be useful to make some distinction between the way I will be using the terms *spiritual* and *religious*. For me the term *spiritual* pertains to a



divine, non-material power and to its life giving infusion into human beings. This divine power has many capacities; it can create, prophesy, reveal true reality, inspire and be an agent of righteousness working through human beings. It can empower them to think, act and become committed to sacred and holy virtues such as faith, hope and love as well as to seek answers to the meaning and purpose of life. I agree with Rizzuto (1979) when she says that we are compelled to image a god of some sort or other: We human beings have no choice as to whether or not to incorporate a belief of a god into our self-perception. Next, I define *religion* as spiritual matters compressed into a dogmatic framework consisting of both thought and practice. *Religion* then is a set of experiences, and reflections on those experiences of a group of people with a superhuman power who is recognized as the creator and governor of the universe. These experiences and reflections are set down in writings, codified, canonized and practiced in rites and rituals within an institutional structure. Religions are both particular and universal in their nature. They are both grounded by the particular time, culture and place in which they were received, and universal in the truths about the divine nature and the human condition which they espouse.

Many in our culture believe the Jewish-Christian teachings to be a vital and powerful expression of our heritage, dealing with Western culture's ultimate concerns. As such, they acknowledge that for believers religious matters are an important organizing principle within a client's personality structure. According to King (1987, p. 282), "For those who do organize their lives around the depth dimensions of religious experience, these experiences have the power to affect the whole of life, to dynamically activate the total person and to be of revolutionary significance." Some

clinicians (Rizzuto, 1979) believe that a formation of the image of God is integral to the formation of the sense of self. As women clients who hold this perspective struggle with concerns of self-esteem, psychologists, clergy, and religious teachers may find this discussion of possible interrelationships useful.

### Theology: Its Nature and Method of Interpreting Scripture

For those readers who are not acquainted with theological terms and method, some discussion of these may prove helpful.

Thomas (1983) reminds us that when we are defining systematic theology, we are talking not about a structure of abstract theoretical propositions, but rather we are talking about the story of the Bible, "...the concrete, dramatic story of God and the people of God, the history of Israel, old and new, seen as the events in which God is revealed for our salvation" (Thomas, 1983, p. 1). It is this story that constitutes the Christian Gospel and the Christian faith, and "Christian theology is the attempt to understand and interpret this story of what God has done" (Thomas, 1983, p. 1). In further clarification, Thomas states that, "...systematic or dogmatic theology is the methodical investigation and interpretation of the content of Christian faith. It is the orderly clarification and explanation of what is affirmed in the Christian message. Theology is an activity or function of the Christian Church carried out by the members of the Church. It is the Church reflecting on the basis of its existence and the content of its message" (Thomas, 1983, p. 1). Finally he reminds us that, "The Church has to reflect on its faith and message in every new age, so that it can

interpret and present them in a way that can be understood in each new period" (Thomas, 1983, p. 1).

How does the theologian deal with the disparity of the texts which were written in the past and the interpretation of these texts in present, in order to make them relevant to contemporary believers? The answer, Congar (1987) states, is supplied by hermeneutics. "This enables the theologian to express the meaning of a traditional statement in the language of the day and in response to present needs" (Congar, 1987, p. 460). The act of theologizing, then, "...is an act of interpretation that actualizes the meaning of revelation, the event of Jesus Christ, and the Church's experience and makes these relevant to contemporary believers" (Congar, 1987, p. 460).

Theologizing depends upon hermeneutics. Hermeneutical theory deals with the phenomenon of understanding. Today most responsible Biblical scholarship is conducted using the method of historical criticism. Krentz observes that in using the historical critical method the Bible is studied critically with the same methods used on all ancient literature. He says, "It provides means to bridge the gap between interpreter and the ancient texts by relating them to a particular history, and by translating their foreign tongues" (Krentz, p. v.).

Krentz (1975) defines historical criticism as a disciplined interrogation of Biblical sources, undertaken in order to secure a maximal amount of verified information. It seeks, via reconstruction, to recognize and describe the meaning that these texts have had as nearly as we can discern in the history of early Christianity. For those asserting that every word of the Bible is the inerrant Word of God and



therefore Divine Truth, historical critical analysis of the texts seems relative and probable. Historical criticism does not make claims to unassailable truth-finding in Scripture. Rather, using the tools of historians of all ancient literature, it asserts only probabilities of what might have been.

The theologian, then, goes about the hermeneutical task. Using historical criticism of the texts, she or he proceeds to draw meanings from Scripture that seem most congruent with the historical context in which the texts were written and then proceeds to interpret them in order that they may provide structure and meaning for today's believers.

### Feminist Criticism: Its Nature and Method of Interpreting Scripture

Some readers may not be acquainted with feminist criticism, how and why it has become important in the minds and work of many theologians. My point of view is that the rise of feminist consciousness is a matter of divine revelation. That is to say, that patriarchal structures in every phase of life are breaking up to make way for another mode and method of women and men relating to one another: the mode and method of equality. I take the position that this breaking up and reordering is the will of God and as such we have no choice as to whether or not it will happen. We have a choice only as to whether or not we will join with each other in trying to discern with accuracy and love God's intention for the human community in order to relate to one another in this new way of equality.

As this change is coming about in every aspect of thought and life, much confusion can result. It is this confusion that brings many clients into psychotherapy

as they try to regain their psychic balance. For those whose sense of themselves, their life and purpose is organized around God's revelation, there is a need to seek understanding and make meaning from the Biblical sources which guide and support the Christian's sense of self. It is not that Christian feminist theologians and Biblical scholars are manipulating the Biblical witness for their purposes, but rather that they are developing a careful analytical process that illumines God's word in Scripture in the light of our new self-understanding. It is my opinion that as psychotherapists attend to the pain of their clients in the confusion of personal changes, they also need to place those personal dilemmas in the larger arena of the drama of social, cultural and religious change. It is here that they may find this discussion of feminist Biblical criticism useful.

The rise of feminist consciousness in every realm of thought and practice in the Western world challenges the patriarchal and androcentric view of the nature of reality. It signals a change in old assumptions that the differences between men and women were what forced women into separate spheres of life and responsibility. For those women who take seriously the authority of the Bible and the Church in evolving their self-concept, the issue of the feminist challenge to that authority shakes the very roots of their self-understanding. The basic question each must ask is what is a correct interpretation of God's creative plan for relationships with men? Is the patriarchal tradition which places women in a subordinate position to men a correct interpretation, or has that been imposed on the texts, the interpretation and selection of the texts? In this regard Farley (1985) states that the double standard for women and men has now been exposed as an androcentric construct. Brueggemann and

Donahue (1978) acknowledge that the problem of sexist presuppositions and methods in Biblical interpretation is widely recognized and may be addressed at various levels in different ways. They applaud serious contributions to the most urgent issue of sexism in Scripture study from those conversant with the newer literary criticism. They state that these contributions challenge some more familiar assumptions about texts and alert us to resources in texts that have appeared marginal and safely neglected, and which have inescapable implications for our situation of faith and life (Trible, 1978, p xii).

I am interested in how a feminist hermeneutic of some of the Biblical passages and theological constructs that subordinate women to men may have an effect on women's self-esteem. My research focused on the attitudes that my sample of Protestant women have in regard to both the androcentric and the feminist reconstruction of some of these Biblical passages and theological constructs. I tested several hypotheses. My first hypothesis is that those women who believe that the feminist interpretation is a more accurate understanding of the intent of the Biblical authors will have a higher measured self-esteem. My second hypothesis is that more seminarians than lay women will be familiar with the feminist analyses of the texts and constructs. I therefore am anticipating that seminarians will show higher self-esteem ratings. Third, I am hypothesizing that those texts and constructs that place women in an equal position with men will contribute more positively to women's self-esteem and that those which place women in a subordinate role to men will contribute more negatively to my sample's measured self-esteem. Finally, I am interested in how women's spiritual well-being interacts with their self-esteem and their knowledge



and attitudes regarding the feminist verses the patriarchal Biblical and theological interpretations. I am hypothesizing that those women whose spiritual well-being is based on a deep regard for their feminist beliefs will have a higher self-esteem.

At this point, I would like to share my definition of feminism. I agree with Farley (1985) who states that feminism presupposes that men and women are equal. While there is a pluralism within feminism, there are assuredly some central convictions. Most fundamental is the conviction that women are fully human and are to be valued as such. Feminist belief about the humanness of women includes the principles of mutuality, the importance of women's own experience as a way to understanding, collaboration as the primary mode for human interaction, and the ecological view of the value of all human beings, all nature, and the whole universe. I would add to Farley's definition my own understanding of Christian feminism. For me Christian feminism is a shared belief that women and men are created by God with equal value and dignity and, further, that it is God's purpose that neither sex should dominate the other. I would go on to say that inherent in feminism is that belief needs to be put into action, and as such Christian feminists are dedicated to implementing all of these principles both in theory and in practice, both in the Church and in the world.

In the last several centuries the situation of women has altered dramatically, especially the circumstances of upper and middle-class white women in Western society--so much so that it is possible to document a rising feminist critical consciousness. Zikmund (1985) describes this phenomenon for us. She reminds us that as these women have become more self-conscious about themselves, their

relationship to authority, especially religious authority, has changed. She feels that today, many of these Christian women have new understandings of their place in religious communities and their relationship to Scripture. It is this new understanding that may be called a "feminist critical consciousness." I take the position that in their evolution of consciousness, many Christian women may now be confused and uncertain regarding their self-concept. Further, I believe that the problem of Christian women's low self-esteem to a great extent has had its genesis in the androcentric interpretation and selection of texts that have been read and expounded upon in our Churches. Are women to listen to their new understanding that they are equal to men, that the Biblical message is one of liberation for all people, women included, or are they to remain in the subordinate position to men that has been the traditional understanding they have been told by Church leaders in an androcentric and patriarchal age is the rightful place in which God has placed them? And how does this choice effect their self-esteem?

Regarding Biblical interpretation, Zikmund (1985) reminds us that until the early nineteenth century, most intellectual and theological work was done out of a prefeminist perspective. There was no conscious awareness that women's experience, as women's experience, was relevant to intellectual work. It was a man's world. Women were part of the male story. This prefeminist consciousness acknowledged that women's lives did have some unique aspects, but the differences were unimportant.

Zikmund (1985) points out that women by the mid-twentieth century came to feel that reinterpretation was not enough. This was a crucial marker. I imagine it is

here that most therapists and their clients or patients probably will be beginning their own understanding of these matters. It is at this point that those with a feminist consciousness in religious matters grew to understand that it was essential to deal with patriarchal tradition itself. The crucial question examined is how should women and men who accepted the promise of liberation deal with the Bible and the Church today in the light of its patriarchal tradition and with a rising feminist consciousness in order to assist women to raise their self-esteem?

A growing number of Biblical scholars, both men and women, are realizing that inclusive questions need to be asked about every Biblical text and every event in Church history: What difference did it make that women were or were not included? If women were not taken into account, why? I agree with Zikmund (1985) that the ultimate aim of a feminist consciousness is to make the experiences and insights of women available to the entire world, not simply to know more about women in and of themselves. I take the position that as women's self-concept evolves to include the knowledge that they are created equally with men, their self-esteem will rise. Concurrently their mental and emotional health as well as their relationships will be richly enhanced. If we are to include women in the total picture, we are called to rethink how we interpret everything. A canon that is inclusive is self-correcting and constantly reinterpreting God's ways with this world. Because our religious faith is grounded in the historical experience of Jews and Christians expressed through Scripture and lived out through history, a feminist critical consciousness must build a theology by moving beyond criticism to constructive alternatives.



As theologians who are electing to work within the Jewish-Christian heritage and to reconstruct it through their feminist lenses, both Ruether (1985) and Schüssler Fiorenza (1985) share with us their points of view on the problems with the patriarchal texts. Ruether says, "What is new about feminist hermeneutics is the appeal to women's experience" (Ruether, 1985, p. 112). She goes on to state, "Not only have women been excluded from shaping and interpreting the tradition from their own experience, but the tradition has been shaped and interpreted *against* them. The tradition has been shaped to justify their exclusion. The traces of their presence have been suppressed and lost from the public memory of the community. The androcentric bias of the male interpreters of the tradition, who regard maleness as normative humanity, not only erase women's presence in the past history of the community but silence even the questions about their absence. One is not even able to remark upon or notice women's absence, since women's silence and absence is the norm" (Ruether, 1985, p. 112-13). I agree with Ruether as she points out that, "The critical principle of feminist theology is the affirmation of and promotion of the full humanity of women. Theologically speaking, whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts this principle is considered not redemptive and must be presumed not to reflect the divine or authentic relation to the divine, or to be the message or work of an authentic redeemer or a community of redemption" (Ruether, 1985, p. 115). Schüssler Fiorenza (1984) goes further in her criticism of patriarchy when she states, "...patriarchy is in my understanding not just ideological dualism or androcentric world construction in language, but a social, economic, and political system of graded subjugations and oppressions. Therefore, I do not speak simply about male

oppressors and female oppressed, or see all men over and against all women.

Patriarchy as a male pyramid specifies women's oppression in terms of the class, race, country, or religion of the men to whom they 'belong'" (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1985, p. 127). Further, she says that a feminist critical theology must explore women's particular experiences of marginalization, victimization, and oppression as well as articulate our individual and historical experiences of liberation. In her view, feminist Biblical interpretation must challenge the Scriptural authority of patriarchal texts and explore how the Bible is used as a weapon against women in their struggles for liberation.

As a critical feminist consciousness comes of age, the situation is further complicated by the fact that religion is different from other disciplines. We do not just study religion, we live it. Changes in religious questions and assumptions affect people deeply. With religion the personal is not just political, it is ontological: It informs our entire way of being and relating to God, not simply our situation in the socio-political order. It is my assumption that women's self-understanding and esteem will be profoundly affected as they continue to alter their view of themselves from excluded and oppressed in society to being created and loved equally by God.

When we ask the question what is at stake in developing a feminist hermeneutic--a feminist theory of interpretation--in relation to the Bible, Farley (1985) observes that it is the interpretation of the Biblical witness as a whole. She, along with other Christian feminists, ask, "Is it a witness that is life-giving for women and for men, a witness that opens access to some truth that is freeing for all? Is it a witness that enables us to make choices that are authentic and good, that are faithful

to the deepest needs of the human community and consonant with its noblest aspirations?" (Farley, 1985, p. 41).

Regarding the choice of sources used in interpretation, Farley (1985) notes that theologians and ethicists always make some judgments about what sources they will use and how they will use them. For example, they determine that secular disciplines (like philosophy) should be included or excluded as sources for theology; they raise up certain Biblical texts and discern that others are of less value. Implicit or explicit in these judgments are beliefs about the nature of human understanding, human experience, divine revelation, the authenticity of particular religious traditions, logical consistency, the nature of reality itself. At the heart of such judgments, Farley says, there can be convictions so basic that to contradict them would be to experience violence done to the integrity of the self. The making of such judgments is not unique to theologians and ethicists. It is part of any approach, that of individual believers or whole churches, to the sources of faith and understanding, to discernment of what we can believe and how we are to live what we believe. It is my conviction that any Biblical text that subordinates women to men does violence to the integrity of women. The Biblical witness claims to present a truth that will heal us, make us whole; it will free us, not enslave us to what violates our very sense of truth and justice.

In responding to these questions, Christ and Plaskow (1979) note that feminist attitudes toward the Jewish-Christian heritage are fraught with tension regarding the possibility of reformability. Many (Christ & Plaskow, 1974, Collins, 1974, Daly, 1973, Starhawk, 1977, Stone, 1976 cited in Christ & Plaskow) believe



that the prebiblical past or modern experience provide more authentic sources for feminist theology and vision. Others (Ruether, 1972, Russell, 1985, Schüssler Fiorenza, 1978, Tribble, 1973 cited in Christ & Plaskow) see the vision of transcendence within tradition as an authentic core of revelation pointing toward freedom from oppression, a freedom that they believe is articulated more clearly and consistently within tradition than without. In this debate, I agree with the position of the latter group of scholars. However overarching this view is, I believe that the diversity within feminist theology and spirituality is its strength. Each thinker will make a vital contribution to transforming the patriarchal culture.

In summary, I agree with those feminist theologians who choose to work within the authority of Scripture (Ruether, 1972, Russell, 1985, Schüssler Fiorenza, 1978, Tribble, 1973 cited in Christ & Plaskow, 1979) because I like they, believe that the Bible has a liberating tradition embodied in its "prophetic-messianic" message which proclaims and embodies ongoing self-critique. With Russell (1984), I agree that God's intention of mending all creation is at the heart of Scripture, and that Biblical authority stems from its story of God's invitation to participate in the restoration of wholeness, peace, and justice in the world. I agree also with Russell when she draws our attention to the fact that feminists are proposing a paradigm shift from the authority of domination or hierarchy to one of authority of experience in community. In this view, she says, reality is interpreted in the form of a circle of interdependence. Ordering is explored through inclusion of diversity in a rainbow spectrum that does not require that persons submit to the domination of others but, rather, that they participate in the common task of creating an interdependent

community of humanity and nature. It no longer tries to get all persons to accept one neat priority system of theological truth but, rather, welcomes all who are willing to share in building a community of human wholeness that is inclusive of women and men.

For women who accept the Bible and the Jewish-Christian perspective as having authority for them in defining their self-concept, moral character, value, and meaning in life, liberating themselves from the dominate world view of patriarchy has been challenging. I believe that the challenge lies within the discovery that the belief system which enslaves and oppresses them, all at once also liberates them. In my research I have sought to prove this point by using several relevant measures and some statistical analyses of my findings.

What, then, has the impact of some of the core Scriptural passages and theological constructs been on women's self-esteem? As we try to answer this question, I invite you to a review of the related research on this topic.

## CHAPTER 2

### A REVIEW OF THE RELATED RESEARCH

#### The Impact of Self-Evaluation

How we feel about ourselves, Ellison (1983) comments, has been shown to be related to a wide variety of personal and interpersonal characteristics. Because most of the findings are correlational, it is impossible, at this point, to determine the direction of cause. It is likely, he continues, that self-esteem may serve as both cause and effect, depending upon the person and the characteristic.

People higher in self-esteem are more active and expressive in group discussions, not particularly sensitive to criticism, show little anxiety, and are much less afflicted with psychosomatic illnesses than low self-esteem people. Those with low self-esteem feel isolated, unlovable, too weak to overcome their deficiencies, and unable to defend themselves, as well as afraid of angering others or drawing attention to themselves in any way (Coopersmith cited in Ellison, 1983). In addition, low self-esteem children have been found to have higher anxiety levels and to receive generally more negative reactions from peers (Felder cited in Ellison, 1983). Intelligence and curiosity are positively associated with self-esteem (Maw, W. H. & Maw, E. W. and Ringness cited in Ellison, 1983). Those with more positive self-evaluation do significantly better in school, while underachievers are more likely to have negative self-feelings (Ousek cited in Ellison, 1983). Finally, those with low self-esteem are more likely to be submissive and dependent, more vulnerable in



interpersonal relations, more concerned about what others think of them, and more likely to have their feelings hurt (Luck cited in Ellison, 1983). Self-Esteem seems to operate at least partially as a mediating variable that interacts with significant stimulus characteristics in affecting such responses as trust (Lugo & Hershey, Ellison and Firestone as cited in Ellison, 1983). In general, less self-disclosure, greater field dependence, and vulnerability to delinquency are related to negative self-worth.

Branden (1991) states that the impact of self-esteem is enormous because human beings are the only creatures who act volitionally and none of us can escape doing so. Each of us must decide by what moral principles we will guide our lives. None can exempt themselves from values and value judgements. The values we adopt may be conscious or unconscious, life serving or life negating, but we must act. To the extent that our actions are congruent with our values, our self-esteem is enhanced. The level of our self-esteem impacts nearly every aspect of our lives, from the nature of our thinking process, to the goals we are likely to set, to how we handle adversity, to how we deal with other human beings, to with whom we are likely to fall in love, to how high we are likely to rise. He says that it gives context to all experience. Who we are at the deepest level of our being, shapes the way we respond to events. He goes on to say that since the nature of a person's self-evaluation has profound effects on their thinking processes, emotions, desires, values and goals, it is the single most significant key to a person's behavior. It follows that to understand a person psychologically, one must understand the nature and degree of their self-esteem, and the standards by which a person judges themselves.

## Some Theoretical Issues in the Measurement of Self-Esteem

### Multiplicity of Self Concepts

Ellison (1983) reminds us that American social psychologists lay a heavy emphasis on the situational factors that emerge in the study of attitudes. This has been due to the repeated observations of inconsistency between the belief, feeling and behavioral components of attitudes. Self-Assessment needs to include conceptually different dimensions of the self. Gergen (1972) agrees that there are common factors in the self-concept, and he presents research indicating the varied and contradictory nature of the self. He suggests the need to investigate the range and complexity of the many selves that each person has rather than reducing a person to one self. While no current self or personality theory systematically identifies the multiple self-concepts and relates them to evaluation, the more recent literature seems to recognize the existence of multiple components of the self (Lugo & Hershey, 1974).

### Secular Bias of Self-Esteem Measures

Gartner (1983) informs us that while Christian thinkers have written extensively on the concept of self-esteem, the field of self-esteem testing has remained almost entirely secular. Virtually all of the more than 200 measures of self-esteem reflect subtle, antibiblical, value assumptions that, from a Christian perspective, severely limit their usefulness and bias their results (Crandall, 1974 as cited in Gartner; Wylie, 1974). Gartner identifies and evaluates those assumptions, and proposes the construction of a Christian test of self-esteem.

Gartner (1983) shows that a glance at the current research comparing the self-esteem of religious Christians to that of nonbelievers is confusing at best. Of the studies the author has surveyed, four found Christians lower in self-esteem, eight found no difference between the groups, and six found Christians higher. Few patterns can be seen in these conflicting findings, in terms of either populations sampled or tests used. This suggests that Christians vary quite a bit in how they think of themselves. It may also be that self-esteem, especially Christian self-esteem is more complex and multifaceted than current measures are able to detect. The author suggests that in addition to being biased against Biblical values, current tests of self-esteem simply do not provide the information Christian professionals would want about their research samples, congregations, or therapeutic clients. He concludes that antibiblical value assumptions render current secular tests of self-esteem grossly biased and, from a Christian perspective, inaccurate in the understanding of humanity and mental health that they reflect.

Gartner (1983) recommends looking at the following aspects of self-esteem tests: Moral self-evaluation, non-moral self-evaluation, self-acceptance, self-worth, relationships, happiness, assertiveness. He presents a rough outline for a Biblical alternative. It proposes a moral humility scale, clear distinction between self-evaluation and self-worth, as well as the inclusion of God-centered items.



## Four Methodological Limitations of Social Science in Defining Self-Esteem

To begin with Van Leeuwen (1983) warns us that the working assumptions of the North American social sciences are largely *materialistic*, *functionalistic*, *reductionistic*, and *probabilistic*. She defines these terms in this manner:

*Materialistic:* She means that they have no methodology (beyond that of handling and classifying observables) for dealing with such non-material phenomena as revealed truth, inherent meaning, or ultimate purpose. Consequently, we cannot expect them to do our homework for us in terms of how, if at all, any of their particular findings apply to our situation as Christians.

*Functionalistic:* She means that they pinpoint their preference for seeing all human behavior in terms of cause and effect relationships--and often oversimplified ones at that. Hence they can say little about the existence and importance of noncausal entities such as choice and accountability.

*Reductionistic:* In addition to viewing human phenomena in cause-and-effect terms, they tend to prefer simple, as opposed to complex or interactive explanations. Thus one easily gets the impression (not altogether unjustified) that psychoanalysis reduces human psychology to "nothing but" the bodily passions, cognitive psychology sees "nothing but" the unfolding rational processes, and behaviorism sees "nothing but" outward motor activity. In one sense, it is inevitable and even desirable that this kind of reductionism occur in scholarship and research: After all, if one is going to look at anything closely and painstakingly, one must inevitably examine it in isolation from almost everything else. But the accompanying risk is that, having compartmentalized human behavior into separate emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and other components, one never "puts Humpty-Dumpty back together again," as a whole being who feels, thinks, perceives, chooses, worships, and acts as one integrated person. In addition, in the constant quest for measurables, multifaceted

phenomena such as self-esteem are often reduced to the number of "agree" or "disagree" responses to a list of questions or statements, or to a count of simple, contrived laboratory behaviors.

*Probabilistic:* Finally, to say that the social science endeavor is probabilistic is another way of saying that it has scant use for individual differences. Instead, in the quest for universal laws of behavior, the individual person's performance disappears into a statistical generalization, or, if atypical, is considered just so much annoying "error variance," rather than a unique and fascinating entity worth pursuing further.

With such limitations now in mind, let no one feel either personally paralyzed or prematurely omniscient after reading the findings and theories reviewed here. Psychological research on self-esteem is but one roughly sketched piece in the vast human puzzle which we continue, when all is said and done, to view through a glass darkly.

Van Leeuwen (1983) says that social science cannot, in its pure form, cope with questions of ontology, morality, and eschatology. Science represents one attempt to describe and account for reality in lawful terms according to well-policed procedures, and it can therefore be of *some* help in our deliberations. Science may also help to keep us from being judgmental; for although there are grounds for decrying the mechanistic amorality of a purely scientific analysis of behavior, it does have the virtue of reminding us that, however morally accountable we remain, we are in fact strongly influenced by a host of emotional, biological, and social forces that interact differently in different people. Consequently, as Paul reminds his readers in Galatians 6, we are each subject to a variety of temptations and have differing

burdens that we bear. Restoration should thus always be in a spirit of gentleness, knowing that we are as weak as any others.

### Some Views on the Relationship of Religion and Self-Esteem

A number of writers are looking at the issue of self-esteem from the interplay between a psychological perspective and a theological perspective. Sullivan (1987) gives us a most sensitive and perceptive discussion on the self system or the interaction between the physical and the psychic self. Of all the myriad authors I have included in this discussion, I am particularly drawn to his perceptions. I feel he most accurately describes what many therapists are ideally trying to achieve in their transactions with clients. In my opinion, it is this kind of unconditional positive regard for the self that effects healings and allows for new growth in clients. For those therapists working from a God-centered perspective, Sullivan gives us a remarkable description of the model Jesus has set for us of how God intends us to love one another. His model sets the stage for me to ask what Biblical passages and theological constructs undergird this model? It also urges me to ask is this model for males only or for all people?

The psychic self Sullivan (1987) divides into three parts---the *world system*, the *self system* and the *perceptive system*. In defining self-esteem, Sullivan asserts that the *self system* is the key to fulfilling one's outer needs. This is where a person achieves the joy and freedom of becoming a complete person. It is also subject to bringing emptiness, inhibition and despair. This inner sanctuary is the very Holy of Holies. In its fullness, the self is humble. Humility is the cornerstone of the



psychologically and spiritually healthy person. Why? Because humility is honesty.

A clear knowledge of who we are allows us to be joyful, with a whole hearted contentment.

According to Sullivan (1987), the basic elements of self-esteem are:

1. I feel that I am good--noble, attractive, lovable in the deep sense of these words.
2. I feel that I am intelligent--have talent, that I am capable and adequate for the work that I have to do, that I have the ability to cope and manage.
3. I feel that I have power--that I am endowed with interior power by which I am able to lead my own life, make my own decisions, the power to pull my own strings.

As Sullivan (1987) views the impact of self-esteem, he believes that self-esteem is the very core of real happiness. It is the central source of joy behind almost every other joy--and the lack of it is the central source of pain behind most other pains. The joy is the exhilaration of being loved, for then I can love myself. Conversely, when you reject me, the deepest hurt I feel is not the loss of your friendship, but rather the ugly feeling which I now have about myself. Because you have rejected me, I now feel that I must be unattractive and unlovable.

It is this fear of psychic pain, Sullivan (1987) feels, that holds many of us from ever achieving deep friendships in our lives. We dread rejection because of how it makes us feel about ourselves. Doing things for others is an invitation to closeness. But for some, doing things for others is a bribe that is offered to take the place of closeness. Fearful people do acts of kindness because they want you to feel the sympathy they have for your pain, to show you that they are concerned about you.

They are masters at giving love, but they do not know how to receive love. They hunger for love, but they also dread being loved. They fear sharing themselves with you because closeness terrifies them. They have a built-in tape that says rejection always follows closeness and that means pain. This burning pain is the loss of self-esteem which the rejection causes.

In addition, Sullivan (1987) feels that the same defense of our self-concepts underlies our longing for success and self-direction, as well as our dread of failure and our dread of feeling trapped. Achieving success and enjoying the praise and recognition which it brings is a very pleasant experience. When people fail, the disappointment at not succeeding is not nearly as painful as the haunting voice inside that says, "you are stupid". I agree with Sullivan when he says that one of the cruelest things that we can do to another is to cause another psychic pain by diminishing their self-esteem. For once I lack self-esteem, all my other resources become diminished and ineffective. Every time I fail to be sensitive to your feelings, I communicate to you the message that you are not too important. Every time I pull back from you, even though I do so because of my own fears of closeness, you feel rejected. Whenever I say ugly things, tear you down, cut you to shreds by my sarcasm and ridicule, or make you look stupid, laugh at your opinions, I strike at your personhood, and cause you pain that all but renders you immobile to recover your equilibrium.

The author (Sullivan, 1987) continues by saying that affirmation and sensitivity are the most beautiful gifts I can give you because they enhance your self-esteem. This is the way I give you the gift of yourself. I give you a new sense of yourself, a

new insight into your beauty and goodness, a new appreciation and joy in yourself, a new confidence that radiates throughout your whole personality. I give you the key whereby you are able to unlock all the treasures of your world system and to fulfill all your needs. Above all, because you now feel in your innermost core that you are beautiful and lovable, you have no hesitation about making the gift of yourself in love. In a very real way, I have redeemed you by my love the way Jesus redeemed us by His.

Further, Sullivan (1987) tells us that the nature of affirmation or affection is an outward sign of love. He asserts that love itself is the work of my mind and my heart. In my mind, he says, I perceive your goodness and beauty. In my heart, I feel a warm response to that beauty. I like you. I like being near you and talking to you. I want to know you better and I want you to know me and like me.

Affirmation and affection are the outward signs of my love. This is the way I invite you into a closer relationship with me, and I hold up a mirror to you in which you are able to see and appreciate your own beauty and great worth. What a blessed thing affection is then! And how careful we must be never to neglect showing it to the people what we appreciate and love. By it, we increase their self-esteem, enliven their powers to reach out and live. We give to them the gift of their very best self.

Another way Sullivan (1987) draws to our attention that we can enhance another's self-esteem is when we are sensitive to the psychic pain which they feel and reach out to relieve it. When I make the effort to walk in another's shoes, I can easily perceive the psychic pain they are experiencing. While I may not be able to shield them from cruel attacks, I can help by letting them know that I understand



what they are feeling and feel it with them. I can let them know how sad it is that they are not appreciated for their gifts. This restores them to feeling good about themselves, because they can see their own goodness reflected in my kindness. This kind of sensitivity is especially loving and redemptive. If I have self-esteem, I can conquer the world. I can achieve and I can enjoy my achievements. I can love and I can believe that I am loved in return. I can let myself be nourished by your love. And I can love God and believe that God really loves me. I am at peace!

While Sullivan (1987) feels that the interplay of the psychological and theological aspects of our human nature are integral to our self-esteem and can be mutually supportive, the question arises for some other psychologists regarding the intertwining of religion and psychology. The controversy revolves around the issue of whether religion contributes to or impedes psychological health.

Spilka (1989) discusses the functional and dysfunctional potentials in religion by utilizing General Attribution Theory and ideas from theology. He feels that religious attributions offer people meaning in ambiguous and crisis situations plus opportunities to maintain or enhance their sense of control and of their self-esteem.

By attribution Spilka (1989) means how people explain situation and events particularly in terms of causes. The fundamental premise of General Attribution Theory is that people make attributions in order to enhance meaning, control and self-esteem. These interpretations are also designed to maintain or increase their sense of power and control and boost their perception of personal worth and well-being. Spilka maintains that on the average when ambiguity is high and control and esteem may be seriously threatened, it is not uncommon to make religious attributions.

Spilka (1989) suggests criteria for assessing whether the attributions that are made are functional or dysfunctional. He assumes that religion is functional when it meets our motives for making attributions, that is, does it give meaning, control and self-esteem. Religious meanings that support human potential, freedom, and development are indeed functional. Those that lead to dogmatism, strict thought, and limit freedom and opportunity, distort reality, separate people and arouse fear and insecurity are dysfunctional. Any faith that realistically maintains or enhances people's feeling of control over their lives and destinies is functional. That which subordinates and reduces the role and power of individuals, which stresses dependency and conformity must be considered dysfunctional. Any faith that lessens the value of human life and capability can only be injurious to the individual in the long run.

Spilka (1989) feels that theology can serve psychological theory and thus a theological psychology has potential for enhancing the understanding of human experience and behavior. He feels that the Jewish-Christian heritage offers a wide range of religiously based self-attributions from the highly positive to the denigratingly negative. He stresses the elevating identification of having been "made in the image of God" or the self denigrating perception of the "fallen sinner" deserving eternal damnation. Being chosen, saved, or born-again can be counterbalanced by guilt, shame, fear, sin, and separation. Religion can either increase or decrease our openness to the reality of ourselves depending on if a person's needs provide enough self-attributional breadth an individual to select favorable or unfavorable comments. I agree with Spilka's analysis that a theological

psychology which provides breadth has potential for enhancing human growth. It is this conviction that urges me to open for my readers the more positive and inclusive images of and for women as viewed from a feminist perspective that allow for highly positive self-attributions. My hope is that seminarians will take seriously the wide range of perceptions possible within the Jewish-Christian heritage and promote only that which is highly positive in the building of self-attributions. This hope bears directly on one of my hypotheses; that the more knowledge women have of the feminist analyses of various Biblical passages and theological constructs, the higher will be their self-esteem.

Spilka's research (1989) clearly states that interpersonal behavior and attributions to control are clearly related. In terms of our cultural values the most favorable judgements accrue to persons who perceive control as vested in themselves. Such persons with an internal locus of control show a greater desire to control social outcomes than those with an external locus of control who see power residing largely outside of themselves (Jones & Shrauger, 1968, cited in Spilka, 1989). The implications of Spilka's paper remain that true *intrinsic* religion constructively unites internal and God controls in an active person-active God sense and this combination pictures a faith that is socially functional. Conversely, this emphasis defines a socially dysfunctional orientation as one that keeps the person passive, that teaches that power resides solely on God, the church and its representatives. In demanding conformity and not individual thought or action the person becomes powerless regardless of the spiritual rhetoric that is employed.



One of the measures I use, the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, provides data on the level of internal versus external locus of control as well as intrinsic versus extrinsic religious orientation of subjects. I am interested to see how this factor interrelates with knowledge and attitudes of feminism versus patriarchy and with self-esteem.

### Some Empirical Research on Religiosity and Self-Esteem

A number of researchers have reported findings on the relationship between religiosity and self-esteem. Their principle concern is to try to determine the role of religion in the individual's psychological and emotional well-being. In the three studies discussed below, each report findings that indicate that *intrinsic* religious behaviors correlate positively with less depression and higher levels of well-being:

At this point, some definition of *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* and may prove helpful. Allport and Ross, (1967) cited in Nelson, (1990), determined that there are two major ways of expressing one's faith, either through *extrinsic* or *intrinsic* religious behaviors. Allport defines *extrinsic* religion as a religion that is not the major organizing motive in life. It plays an instrumental role only: It serves and rationalizes assorted forms of self-interest. In this form of religious orientation, the full creed and teaching of religion are not adopted. These people do not serve their religion; their religion is subordinated to serving them. The major organizing motive is always self-interest. In contrast to *extrinsic* religion, Allport stated that with *intrinsic* religion, dogma is tempered with humility. A religious sentiment of sorts

floods the whole life with motivation and meaning. Religious sentiment is no longer limited to self-interest. Only in such a widened religious sentiment does the teaching of other-regard and service to humanity take root.

Genia and Shaw (1991) conducted a study consisting of 309 female and male subjects who volunteered from five different religious denominational orientations. The study examined the relationship between orientation and depression on a religious sample representing five major denominational groups.

Genia and Shaw's (1991) results indicate that all subjects with an *intrinsic* religious commitment were least depressed. No difference in depression was found among the *extrinsic*, pro-religious or non-religious categories. Religious affiliation was unrelated to depression. Their findings support the observations of others (Allport and Ross, 1967 and Hood, 1979 cited in Genia, 1991), that an *intrinsic* faith may be inherently therapeutic for individuals who are inclined toward a religious interest. Genia and Shaw state that while this study contains methodological problems which preclude definite conclusions and limit its generalizability, they conclude that the study's main contribution is that it provides evidence for the validity of the religious orientation dimensions.

Because of their commitment to studying for the ministry, my assumption is that seminarians in my study will be more intrinsically orientated than parishioners, and that all subjects with an intrinsic religiosity will have higher self-esteem. The measure on Spiritual Well-Being that I will use should produce data on these points.

Maton (1989) notes that research indicates the relationship between religion and psychological well-being is complex and cannot be taken for granted. Rather

than self-esteem, he uses well-being as an indicator. His sample was 101 members (both women and men) of eight Compassionate Friends mutual help groups dealing with parental bereavement. Maton developed his own three-item scale (Maton, 1984) in order to assess spiritual support. Depression was assessed by the depression scale from the Hopkins Symptom Checklist (Derogatis et al, 1974 cited in Maton). His investigation yielded data indicating that in the full sample, spiritual support was inversely and significantly related to depression ( $p < .05$ ) but was not significantly related to self-esteem. For the high-stress subsample, spiritual support was significantly positively related to both depression ( $p < .05$ ) and to self-esteem ( $p < .01$ ). For the low-stress subsample, spiritual support was not significantly related to either variable. Maton's findings provide support for the view that individuals under high levels of life-event stress are likely to benefit from perceived spiritual support. He defined spiritual support as support perceived in the context of an individual's relationship with God, focusing on perceptions and experiences of God's personal love, presence, constancy, guidance, and availability for the self. Maton speculates that spiritual support may influence well-being through directly enhancing self-esteem and reducing negative affect, or through enhancing positive and adaptive appraisals of the meaning of a traumatic event. He feels that such emotional and cognitive benefits may further lead to an increased capability to pursue adaptive stress-related coping strategies and to an enhanced capacity for perceiving and receiving functional social support from others.

While both Genia and Shaw (1991) and Maton (1989) gathered data from both women and men, I see their research useful in documenting that those who have a



strong, internalized faith are less depressed and feel spiritually supported in times of high stress. Since depression is one of the main presenting symptoms that clinicians report in women clients, I am assuming that those women in my study who have a higher degree of spiritual well-being will be healthier, in regard to having less depression.

### The Theology of Self-Regard

#### Theological Doctrines Central to Understanding Self-Esteem

Ellison (1983) reviews for us the essential elements of Biblical theology that undergird the Jewish-Christian concept of self-esteem.

#### The Doctrine of Creation

Here Ellison (1983) points out that the Biblical roots of positive self-regard may be traced initially to the creation accounts in Genesis. The Doctrine of Creation asserts that we human beings are an intentional and special creation of a loving God, who creates us in the divine image, for a mutually equal relationship with each other, intends us to be in loving relationship with our creator, gives us dominion over all the rest of creation, provides abundantly for our needs, and proclaims us to be good. Further Ellison points out that the implication of God's unconditional love is its *unchanging nature*. In human relationships, positive feedback from others, which is basic to positive self-esteem, is not always consistent. Those who love us do not love us perfectly as God loves us, and therefore, we do not always achieve the unbroken self-regard we would like to have from them. However, since God's love is

steadfast, it is there that we find a stable source of positive regard which carries us through the vagaries of human relationships and allows us to stand with integrity and independence.

### The Doctrine of Sin

While God's love is unconditional and unchanging, our experience of it is not always consistent. The major obstruction, Biblically speaking, is our capacity to sin, or to move out of loving relationship with God by thinking or feeling that we can live our lives successfully by our own efforts alone, do it all by ourselves. Likewise, the conditional nature of human valuing processes and much of the struggle to experience positive self-esteem may be traced to the effects of sin. *Original sin* is fundamentally the ability to choose to violate our relationship with God. In violating our relationship with God, wanting to go it alone, we cut off our central source of self-esteem and become self-centered, rather than God-centered. Ellison (1983) says that the myth of Adam and Eve's transgression in the Garden of Eden is an attempt to put into comprehensible story form this very human process that we all experience--of feeling we can be totally independent, live our lives without regard for others, be perfect, and need nothing more than what we can supply to ourselves. Adam and Eve experienced their transgressions as shame. They tried to hide, just as all of us try to hide what is bad from ourselves and from others. Ego defenses are fundamentally attempts to guard ourselves from negative truth. In the act of redemption and the continuing process of forgiveness, God's grace allows us to face the truth about ourselves and restore the loving relationship.

Ellison (1983) reminds us that the critical distinction here is that without God, human beings are helpless, but never worthless. The Doctrine of Sin delineates us as creatures capable of falling away from actions and thoughts that draw us into God-like perfection, but never implies that a person who is in the state of sin is worthless or not as equally valued by God as those who are "blameless in God's sight". The underlying dynamic for our self-esteem, or human worth, is the unconditional love of God, expressed in the continuous redemptive acts, so well expressed in the passage, "We love, because God first loved us" (1 John 4:19). We, therefore, not only love God in reciprocation, but we also can love ourselves because God validates our worth simply by loving the creation without limit or condition. Unconditional love, however, does not mean that God has no standards or requirements. Redemption is conditioned upon repentance. When we repent our sinful ways, we bring ourselves back into loving relationship with God. However, if we do not repent, we are not rejected by God, because God waits for us with a patience that endures forever.

*Sin as a Negative Self-Image:* Hoekema (1983) takes up the issue of the negative self-image. He states, rightly, I believe, that there is among many Christian religious traditions a morbid preoccupation with the sin and depravity of the human condition. Hoekema explores the resources of the Christian faith for the cultivation of a positive self-image. He states that when properly understood and taken in its totality, the New Testament repudiates this kind of negative self-image. What the New Testament writers emphasize is that the Christian is a new creature---who, to be sure, continues to struggle against sin during this life, but does so as one who is more than a conqueror through Christ.



*Guilt and Self-Esteem*: Hoekema (1983) agrees with Ellison (1983) that forgiveness of sin is essential to a positive self-esteem. He says that nothing contributes more to a negative self-image than feelings of guilt. When people are obsessed with guilt feeling, they despise themselves, feel worthless, and are very likely to feel depressed.

What do the Scriptures teach about guilt? The first thing we should note is that the Bible highlights the problem of guilt, thereby bringing it more clearly into focus as a major human dynamic. I agree with Hoekema (1988) in his analysis of the role of guilt in human development as expressed in the Biblical witness. One of the primary ways in which our consciences develop is through paying attention to what thoughts and behaviors give rise to guilt feelings. Without well-developed consciences, we could not care for ourselves nor live in relationship to one another. Scripture stresses that when we commit sins, they are violations not only against ourselves and against others, but also against God. The heart of the Christian message is that the experience of guilt, instead of blocking our growth, can be used as an opportunity to deepen our awareness of more loving possibilities of interactions. We are given a way to move beyond guilt through confession, to be cleansed and then to again reclaim our rightful status of oneness with God. When we sin against ourselves or against our neighbors, we need to apologize, ask forgiveness, and make restitution, if necessary, but maintaining feelings of guilt toward God are meant to be done with forever. We are assured by Scripture that when we confess our sins to God and ask forgiveness, our sins are, indeed, forgiven. Here the principle of Jesus Christ being the perfect sacrifice, given for us comes into play. It is in our

identification with the full humanity and the full divinity of Christ that we know our possibilities for change to lead new lives...lives that are more Christ-like and therefore more pleasing to God. No matter what we do, if we have a contrite heart and intend to change our old ways and lead new lives, we are assured of God's forgiveness. The confident appropriation of our forgiveness, the exhilaration of knowing that God accepts us and loves us in spite of our shortcomings and failures, is the foundation for a positive self-image. Because God has accepted us, we can now also accept ourselves.

"Old Person---New Person": Crucial to an understanding of the Doctrine of Sin is the concept of "OLD PERSON" and "NEW PERSON". It is rather commonly held by Christians that each believer is both an old and a new person. According to this view, the old person and the new person are distinguishable "parts" of the believer. Both Hoekema (1988) and I seriously question this view. More accurately, we believe that according to the New Testament, the believer, at baptism symbolically and actually, has put off the old person and had put on the new. The believer, then *is* a new creation. However, sin still dwells within and she or he still commits sin. The renewal is a progressive process. The newness is a new self-understanding and a new consciousness of the possibilities that exist for growth into the image of Christ and for the power available through the Holy Spirit to actualize this growth. So the new creation is the person who acknowledges the example set in Christ and acknowledges the power to access that example for her or himself. With Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, came the knowledge that God's intention was to reveal to the community in that act that we each have God's Holy Spirit within us, permitting us to be

resurrected into new and everlasting life and, therefore, no longer are we bound to a life of the flesh and sin as our only possibilities. So the person united with Christ in faith has a new self-image, whose attitudes and behavior gradually will be transformed to reflect this new alignment. Of course, the struggle with sin is not over. The Christian life is often referred to as a battle, a race and a wrestling against evil spirits; we are told to resist the devil, to take heed lest we fall, and to put on the whole armor of God. Moreover, in this struggle, we do not always win; we do not resist every temptation. The point is, however, that when we do fall into sin, we can access our new person self-image in a very conscious way, and we can count on the divine power necessary to make the changes we choose to make.

"Flesh" and "Spirit": Here Hoekema (1983) then asks the question what does Paul mean by "flesh" and "Spirit"? He feels that we must not see in these two concepts a contrast between two aspects of human nature, a "fleshly" aspect and a "spiritual" one. Rather, we can think of these terms as describing two power-spheres within each individual. It was Jesus Christ, with his two distinct but intertwined natures of being fully human and fully divine, that first gave humanity the new self-understanding that within each of us lies these two natures or power-spheres also. Each believer continues the struggle to live more fully empowered by the realm of the spiritual self than by the influence of the flesh self. One engages in this struggle, not in an atmosphere of defeat, but in the confidence of victory. This too, adds strength, courage and a distinct air of self-confidence to the self-image of the believer.

Hoekema (1983) believes that the Biblical notion of the believer becoming "a new creation" is central to Christians' self-image. A primary passage is 2 Corinthians



5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, she or he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come." He or she becomes a new creation with the acceptance of this new perspective, this new attitude of self-regard. They belong to a new age that will culminate in the new heavens and the new earth from which all the consequences of sin will have been removed and in which God will be all in all. The text does not simply predict that this transformation will happen in the future, but asserts that it has happened now! The idea of *both present* and *future* are held in a creative oneness. Paul says that if we are in Christ, we are new creatures now--not yet *totally new*, but *genuinely new*.

The Christian life, then, involves something radically different in one's self-image: a genuinely new way of perceiving one's self and one's possibilities as well as one's purpose. Integral then, to being a faithful Christian is possessing and living out a strong and positive self-image. If my premise is correct, my sample of Christian women will have low self-esteem issues related to a patriarchal double standard imposed on the Biblical texts and theological constructs. This research will lend support to those feminists theologians who are working for reconstructed interpretations and to psychotherapists who can present women clients with alternative concepts for their consideration.

*Self-Esteem and Pride*: Ellison (1983) tries to clarify one of the most misunderstood Christian concepts, that of pride, and how it relates to positive self-esteem. Scripture indicates that pride is one of the sins most abhorred by God. (Proverbs 6:16-17; James 4:6-7):

Proverbs 6:16-17 There are six things that God hates, seven that are an abomination to God: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,...

James 4:6-7 But God gives all the more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." ....

Very often preachers leave congregations with the notion that self-esteem is a cover-up for arrogance, that the self is the seat of sin and, therefore, must be emptied. What, then, is the Biblical notion of pride and how does it differ from a healthy sense of the self? Pride, Ellison (1983) tells us, is characterized by an exaggerated desire to win the notice or praise of others and the rigid taking of a superior position in which others' opinions are virtually never seen to be as good as one's own. Humility is proposed as the opposite of pride; the correct and healthy attitude of choice and pleasing to God. Humility is characterized by accurate self-appraisal, responsiveness to the opinions of others, and a willingness to give praise to others before claiming it for one's self. It is the Biblical concept of humility, then, that is analogous to our present day conceptual understanding of positive self-esteem. The ability to face one's self and to assess and accept both strengths and weaknesses accurately, while being responsive to, but not overly dependent upon, social approval are basic ingredients of non-defensive self-esteem.

I agree with Ellison (1983) and the many psychologists who have associated both pride and excessive self-disparagement with indications of basic feelings of inferiority or low self-esteem. I feel his point is very well taken that humility and positive self-esteem are not based upon self-negation or the "emptying of one's self."



They are based upon affirmation of God's regard for us and a right relationship with God in which imperfection, weaknesses, and strengths can be accepted or confessed and changed as appropriate, through our own human effort and by God's grace. In the act of creating us in the divine image, God gave us intrinsic capacities that can be developed, enjoyed and experienced as good. We have not been created as "empty shells", but rather as unique personalities through whom God acts upon this earth. The divine pattern is that God acts and human beings respond, in as loving ways as we can in response to God's loving of us (1 John 4:19), "We love because God first loved us." We are to be marked by humility based on accurate and positive self-appraisal. Christians basking in God's perfect love are able to accept their imperfections more completely, acknowledge their sins, and face themselves free from fear of rejection (1 John 4:18).

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.

What then, is true humility? Ellison (1983) provides us with a chart comparing True Humility, Pride and False Humility.

Whereas pride is inevitably connected with an achievement or power basis, humility frees people from the bondage of striving to gain approval by always looking superior in the eyes of others or themselves.

Grace: I agree with Ellison (1983) that the fundamental dynamic behind humility is *grace*. The Scripture consistently emphasizes that neither spiritual salvation nor human value are rooted in *works*. Rather, they are founded upon grace.



## CHART 1

### Comparison of True Humility, Pride and False Humility

| True Humility                                     | Pride   | False Humility   |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Based on self worth                            | 1. Based in self-doubt  | 1. Based in self-deprecation                                   |
| 2. Accepts both strengths and weaknesses          | 2. Denies weaknesses  | 2. Rejects strengths   |
| 3. Is open to both positive and negative feedback | 3. Is closed to corrective and negative feedback              | 3. Is closed to affirmation and positive feedback              |
| 4. Results in accurate appraisal                  | 4. Results in unrealistic appraisal (attitude of superiority) | 4. Results in unrealistic appraisal (attitude of inferiority). |

Fundamentally, there are two ways in which one can gain and maintain self-esteem: The first is through power or *achievement*; the second is through *love* and relationship. For the most part, our society socializes us into the former. Grace relieves us of that pressure and, also, of the temptation of pride. When one realizes that the spiritual gifts are not earned but given through grace, the emphasis shifts to how can I best use my gifts. Both the gifts of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit make sense only when used interpersonally.

### The Doctrine of Redemption

Ellison (1983) reminds us that the Bible is filled with tales of those who defy God, are unfaithful, untrustworthy, who do not walk in the Godly path, but, who,

nevertheless, are always redeemed by the countless saving acts of God, saved back into loving relationship with the all loving God. The Doctrine of Redemption emphatically states that the main theme of the Biblical testimony is that of salvation history, or the continuous ways in which God interacts with human beings in order to restore the loving bonding that characterizes the God-person relationship. The process by which we can move beyond our sins is *confession* and *forgiveness* which take us then to redemption. Confession is the means to intrapsychic and interpersonal healing and restoration of our self-worth. Confession brings a sense of emotional cleansing through the release of anxiety and bitterness. By bringing our errors into our conscious awareness, we bring into focus our powers to make the changes we would like to make. Confession restores relationships and re-establishes interpersonal transparency. Through confession, we experience forgiveness and we are once again able to receive and give the mutual affirmation that is the foundation of self-worth. Ellison points out that it is the process of confession that enables us to accept ourselves as we are, rather than trying to build worth on the basis of denial and self-deceit.

### The Doctrine of Community

Ellison (1983) also discusses the Doctrine of Community and its essential nature in building and sustaining self-esteem. Throughout the New Testament, Paul emphasizes the importance of incarnating Christ's love. Believers are urged to be kind, meek, compassionate, patient, forbearing and loving, to judge not and to consider their own sins and weaknesses. These qualities are not only essential for



corporate harmony, but they are fundamental to the building of individual self-esteem upon which the corporate conflict or harmony pivots. Judgment begets judgment and conflict; praise elevates self-esteem and fosters harmony. Judgment brings out natural ego-defenses; affirmation brings love without blame or judgment.

In addition Ellison (1983) draws to our attention that self-esteem is primarily shaped and sustained through *social reinforcement*. It is developed in an interpersonal context. Self-esteem is initially rooted in the evaluation of significant others in one's community. A society that values each human being simply because they exist, and not for what they accomplish, is a society based upon the Godly principle of the innate goodness and worthiness of all people. God's love being unconditional gives us the knowledge that we are continuously valued, and therefore we can continuously value ourselves.

### The Doctrine of Servanthood

Another doctrine of faith which Ellison (1983) highlights as essential for positive self-esteem is servanthood. Throughout his writings, the apostle Paul repeatedly identifies himself as a "doulos", or bond servant, of the Lord. His primary self-concept was that of God's servant. The result of this identification, is that we become concerned about God's evaluation of us rather than about society's evaluation. We become freed from much of the anxiety and destructive impact of negative evaluation from others because of our concern with the affirmation of God. We can also invest our work with special purpose and take on a more caring and



constructive quality toward our efforts. To the extent that we identify wholeheartedly with God's purposes for ourselves and for humanity and God's evaluation as the basis of our lives, self-esteem will be removed from the more transient and unpredictable conditioning of the social context.

### The Doctrine of Jesus Christ

Ultimately, the most compelling Biblical foundation for positive self-esteem is the person of Jesus Christ. He is the greatest example of true humility and of positive self-esteem. He asserted who he was without apology. As Christ accepted and lived out his call, so we are urged and encouraged to do the same. Just as Jesus proclaimed the two great commandments to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:29-31), so he lived out the principle that self-love based in high self-regard is essential in order for us to be of service to God and to one another.

These six theological doctrines lie at the heart of the Christian faith. I feel that awareness of these central affirmations is a major resource in assisting psychotherapists and clients to guide and clarify conceptualizations of the self that are vital to developing healthy self-esteem.

In regard to their applicability to my research, first of all, while measures of Christian self-esteem can differ on a number of issues from scales developed to measure humanistic concepts of self-esteem, the self-esteem measure I used has embedded in it some of the basic concepts of these doctrines. Secondly, I wanted to make certain that my measure on patriarchy versus feminism included items from the Biblical passages and theological constructs that are central to these doctrines.

The passages and theological constructs that concern me are precisely those that both do and do not count women equal to men in the application of these doctrines: In fact, they specifically uphold all humanity and deny that women are included equally with men.

### Women and Self-Esteem

The patriarchal structuring of an androcentric system which places women in subordinate positions to men, which devalues the unique gifts and talents of women and the resulting psychological symptoms of a wide range of self-esteem related issues from general depression and passivity to anxiety, dependency and a need to please as well as greater helplessness has been noted by many psychologists and psychoanalysts (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983; Long, 1986; J. B. Miller, 1976; Rivers, et al, 1979; Sanford & Donovan, 1984; Small, et al, 1980).

Sanford & Donovan's (1984) exploration of self-esteem and female experience rests on four related premises. For their clinical data, they used a sample of 320 women who participated in self-esteem enhancement groups. These women discussed the role of self-esteem in their lives and the lives of women they know. I feel these four premises are basic to an understanding of the causes and dynamics of the reality of women's lives. It is this kind of overarching perspective which lies as the basis of a feminist analysis: It is the very point of intersection for me in relating the psychological findings to the theological findings.

1. Low self-esteem among women is largely the result of female oppression in a male-dominated culture and society, and constitutes an insidious form

of oppression in its own right. A woman whose career opportunities, for example, are restricted because of sex discrimination is externally oppressed. But a woman whose career opportunities are restricted because she had been taught to think of herself as lacking in capabilities and not worth much is also internally oppressed.

2. Low self-esteem is at the bottom of many of the psychological problems that plague individual women today, and attempts to "cure" these problems without addressing what underlies them can often lead to other problems. For instance, a woman who compulsively overeats or is dependent upon alcohol may be able to change her behavior in that specific regard. But when she does, the low self-esteem behind the original problem will probably manifest itself in other ways.

3. Low self-esteem and the psychological problems it gives rise to facilitate the continuation of women's external oppression in a male-dominated world. A woman who is taught from childhood that she is of less value than males, for instance, easily may come to believe it, and her lack of faith in her own value will predispose her to depression and passivity, which, in turn, will make it easier for others to keep her down--down being her "proper place."

4. The development of self-esteem in individual women is necessary for the advancement of women as a group. Male-dominated culture and society can continue only if women accept and internalize the notion that women naturally are and deserve to be second-class. For a woman to hold herself in high esteem in a world where women are held in low esteem is to tacitly challenge the prevailing social, political and economic order.



The authors (Sanford & Donovan, 1984) acknowledge that the relationship between women's lowly social status and women's self-attitudes is circular and extremely complex. In exploring it, they point out that their guiding principle has been this: As women we cannot understand ourselves and our attitudes toward ourselves unless we understand the dynamics of the family situations in which we were raised and the culture and society in which we interact. We cannot understand either our individual upbringing and experience or the larger culture and society without some understanding of history and women's consistently ignored place in it.

I agree with Sanford and Donovan (1984) that the development of self-esteem in individual women is necessary for the advancement of women as a group. I would add to their premises that as women we cannot understand ourselves and our attitudes toward ourselves unless we understand the effect our religious heritage has had upon us. If my hypothesis, that women who test with a higher feminist knowledge of Biblical texts and theological constructs will have a higher self-esteem and a higher sense of spiritual well-being, can be substantiated, then hopefully clergy, psychotherapists and those who teach religious matters will be encouraged to re-educate themselves, their parishioners, clients and students to these feminist reconstructions. In this way I feel religious women can make intelligent and informed choices as to how their spiritual development should best proceed in the interest of raising their self-esteem.

## Theoretical Issues

Sanford and Donovan (1984) point out that although myriad studies measuring women's self-esteem levels have been done over the years, most have been on white women, thus they cannot be considered representative of all women. Moreover, the bulk of the existing studies simply establish the fact of low self-esteem among the women as compared to men studied and do little to explain its causes or dynamics. Finally, many studies are gender-comparative: Instead of linking women's self-esteem levels to women's experience in the world, women's self-esteem levels are compared to men's levels. They feel that this sort of approach is problematic, for it enforces the notion that males are the norm, and ignores the fact that from the moment of birth, male and female experience in the world is very different.

The authors (Sanford & Donovan, 1984) state that finding scientific evidence to validate women's experience or "prove" their clinical observations had been further hindered by the androcentric bias that permeates most of the existing research and literature of self-esteem. Although several hundred studies of female subjects have been performed, these studies constitute only a small portion of the total research on self-esteem. Looking through the clinical work on self-esteem, they found that nearly all the supposedly general studies have been performed on male subjects, and it is from the study and/or observation of males, and males alone, that universal conclusions about human psychology, behavior and experience have been drawn. In addition psychologists have noted that until recently women have played only a minor role as theorists in the social sciences. The authors of the major theories of human

development have been men (Belenky, et al, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Sanford and Donovan, 1984).

From the moment women gained a foothold in the academic world, they sought to examine and dispel beliefs suggesting sexual polarities in intelligence and personality characteristics. However, research studies and critical essays on the topic have focused on the demonstration of women's intellectual competence, minimizing any differences that were found between the sexes (Maccoby & Jacklin 1974, cited in Sanford & Donovan, 1984; Rosenberg 1982). The focus has been on studying the intellectual capacities most often cultivated by men rather than on identifying aspects of intelligence and modes of thought that might be more common and highly developed in women.

Fortunately in the field of psychology, there has recently been an explosion of research on women, on sex roles, and on sex differences that has contributed to our understanding of sexual inequality and has resulted in a major reconsideration of the concept of "gender" (Weinrich-Haste, 1983). This has had a substantial effect on theory and methodology. Weinrich-Haste states that lately attention has been paid to reformulating both cultural and scientific conceptions of masculinity and femininity, in the light of inadequacies in the traditional dichotomy, since it has consistently been demonstrated that characteristics which are associated with femininity are devalued by social scientists and by society in general. She points out that in the field of psychological research in both mental and physical health, there is increasing recognition that the paradoxes and conflicts of the traditional female role cannot be ignored in any consideration of women's mental health.



## Some Empirical Research on Women and Self-Esteem

Long (1986) says, "Historically, the acquisition of appropriate sex-typed behaviors and characteristics, resulting in a masculine identity in males and feminine identity in females, has been considered a prerequisite to mental health by theorists of the socialization process (Bandura, 1969 and Mischel, 1966 cited in Long).

Differential behaviors and characteristics have been endorsed in the sex-typing process, with the more instrumental competency-oriented "masculine" traits consistently viewed as more positive and more valued than the expressive relationship-oriented "feminine" traits (Bassoff & Glass, 1979 and Taynor & Deaux, 1975, cited in Long). Even mental health professionals have agreed with such endorsements as recently as 1970 (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, & Vogel, 1979, cited in Long, p. 323)".

Long (1986) continues by pointing out that, "In recent years, concern regarding the restrictive effect that traditional sex roles can have on mental health, particularly in women, has become widespread. "Masculinity" and "femininity" are no longer viewed as mutually exclusive dimensions of a *bipolar continuum*, and the concept of psychological "androgyny" - the endorsing of both traditional masculine and feminine attributes - has reorganized traditional perspectives on sex roles (Bem, 1974 and Singer, 1976 cited in Long). The concept has generated widespread research on androgynous versus sex-typed individuals (Bem, 1974, Gilbert, 1981, Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975 cited in Long) with the expectation that androgynous individuals would reflect greater general adjustment and mental health than their sex-

typed counterparts" (p. 323). Long goes on to say that "Results of studies in the last decade have suggested, however, that although "androgyny" may indeed be associated with mental health, it appears to be the "masculine" attributes that correlate with high self-esteem and mental health in both men and women and that "femininity" appears to be generally unrelated (Antill & Cunningham, 1980, Bassoff & Glass, 1979, Thomas & Reznikoff, 1984, cited in Long, p. 323).

Heilbrun & Bailey (1986 cited in Long, 1986) tested the prevailing assumption that "masculinity" and "femininity" develop independently by examining these two types of sexual traits. They also examine the possible moderating effects of gender and stage of the feminist movement. Self-descriptions of 1,623 college undergraduates (688 males and 935 females) were considered and collected in 1958-1964, 1970-1974, and 1977-1982. Their findings did not support the assumption that masculinity and femininity developed independently. A significant positive relationship ( $p > .001$ ) was found between the presence of masculine and feminine traits within the same individual, and this was generally true whether the person was female and male and whether the self-descriptions were collected as early as 1958-1964, or as late as 1977-1982. The only qualification for this powerful main effect was an interaction with gender. Despite the obvious concordance of masculine and feminine endorsements in both men and women, the effect was stronger in men ( $p < .001$ ). They found that gender stereotypes may have been overemphasized as determinants of the differential behavior of women and men. The difference between men and women are often small.

Long (1986) points out that although burgeoning research has indicated that it is "masculinity" that appears to be the predictor of self-esteem, the fact that it has been based on college students leaves a gaping deficit in the research to date. It seems reasonable to expect that among special populations of women, one might reasonably expect to find differences that might influence the interaction between masculinity and self-esteem. Women clients, for example, consistently present with a wide range of self-esteem-related issues, from general depression and passivity to anxiety, dependency, and a need to please (Brodsky & Hare-Mustin, 1980, cited in Long, 1984). Women who are victims of domestic violence in particular, have been shown to reflect lower self-esteem and greater helplessness, passivity, dependency, and an acceptance of traditional male and female sex-roles than non-victims (Walker, 1978, cited in Long, 1986). Professional women on the other hand may experience a discrediting of their own abilities in attributing to factors other than their own competence, and fear of success.

With this in mind, Long (1986) addresses the question of whether masculinity is a significant predictor of both self-esteem and self-acceptance for female professionals, clients, and victims of domestic violence, as well as college students. Long's results indicate that masculinity does indeed indicate to be a significant predictor of self-esteem in all groups except students ( $p < .01$  for professionals and  $p < .001$  for clients and victims). Step-wise multiple regression analyses showed masculinity to be a better predictor of self-esteem than education, occupation, femininity, or locus of control. Significant correlations at the .05 level were also found between masculinity and self-acceptance in all groups except students.



Significant correlations were also found between an internal locus of control and self-esteem in all groups except students ( $p$  ranged from  $< .01$  to  $.001$ ). According to Long's results, femininity seems to be generally insignificant as a predictor of either self-esteem or self-acceptance.

Frank, Towell and Huyck (1985) report the effects of sex-role traits on three aspects of psychological well-being in a sample of middle-aged mothers. Ninety-seven women completed the PRF-Andro Scale (Berzins, Welling, & Wetter, 1978, 1981), a questionnaire on sex-roles orientation; Rosenberg's (1965) 10-item Self-Esteem Scale; Symptom Check List (SCL-90 Derogatis, Rickels & Rock, 1976) on symptom distress, and a 7-item mastery scale also used by Pearlin and Schooler (1978) as well as a 17-item "Self Attitude Questionnaire" (SAO) to test for a sense of mastery. Their results show that women describing themselves as more masculine had more positive evaluations of their self-worth ( $p < .01$ ) and felt more in control of their lives ( $p < .01$ ). Women describing themselves as more feminine reported more symptoms of psychological distress ( $p < .01$ ). These researchers cite studies with college women that show again that masculinity predicts not only a sense of mastery and self-esteem (Whitley, 1983), but also less symptoms of psychological distress (Frank et al., 1984).

Jones and Lamke's (1985) random sample on 287 college women compared self-esteem levels in those women choosing "feminine" occupational groups as opposed to women choosing "masculine" type groups. The Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ short form), (Spence et al., 1974) was used to assess sex role orientation. Their results show that the masculine women in the feminine

occupational group and the "androgynous" women in both groups had significantly higher levels of self-esteem ( $p < .05$ ) than the masculine women in the masculine occupational group. Further the "androgynous" and masculine women in each occupations group had higher levels of self-esteem than did feminine and "undifferentiated" women in each group.

Shapiro and Shapiro (1985) have done an exploratory study on 79 males and 138 females using the constructs of active-assertive and yielding-letting-go control (both positive and negative). They feel that this construct may be useful when applied to female and male sexual stereotypes, as well as to the concepts of psychological health. Their findings indicate that both the healthy female and male are perceived as having a balance of active and yielding qualities, in stark contrasts to both the "traditional male" and "traditional female".

Van Leeuwen (1983) takes up the issue of women's psychological development in the teenage years. A new study of 3,000 students in grades 4 through 10 in 12 nationwide locations, conducted by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), (1991), reports that girls experience a significant drop in self-esteem during adolescence--a drop far more drastic than boys. Girls enter high school with less self confidence, fewer dreams for the future, and less faith in their abilities to succeed. The study reports that according to counselors and human development professionals who are experts on self-esteem topics, low self-esteem levels are more likely to be reinforced by societal messages and traditional expectations. Consequently, girls tend to worry more about their physical appearance. They also begin to expect less from life and limit their horizons.



Small, et al., (1980) examines the relationship between sex-role topology, medical, and psychiatric, symptomatology, and personality functioning in 79 male and 101 female adolescents with an average age of 18.3. Participants were administered the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), Offer Self Image Questionnaire (OSIQ), Self Rating Depression Scale (SRDS), and Cornell Medical Index (CMI). They report results showing that in comparison to males, females reported significantly more medical and psychiatric symptomatology, including depression ( $p < .001$ ). Females also appeared to be more constrained than males in several areas of psychological functioning ( $p < .001$ ). While a particular sex-role topology was not related to self-reported psychiatric and medical symptoms, sex clearly was. Females reported having the most complaints, regardless of sex-role topology. However sex-role typology indicated that being androgynous or masculine, which has been found to be associated with positive psychological attributes, always shows a more favorable adjustment ( $p < .001$  to  $.05$ ). The authors assert, however, that biological sex--irrespective of the sex-role traits one possesses--is still the most important factor.

These researchers feel that this possibly reflects the fact that women are still thwarted in reaching many social, occupational, and educational goals. Reports indicating that women earn less than men in similar positions and find it harder to advance than their male counterparts (Oppenheimer, 1975 cited in Small, et al.,) support this interpretation. Related is the idea that females perceive themselves to be more constrained and lack satisfactory outlets, thus, they reported a higher sense of duty, concern and empathy for others, and assumed a conservative stance in their sexual attitudes and concern for their future. Females were also found to have more



concern and empathy for others in a better developed superego. The "androgynous" teenager always showed more favorable adjustment than the "masculine" and "feminine" groups. Androgynous individuals possessed adaptive capabilities and resources, such as effective coping techniques, emotional integration, communication skills, and a well-defined self-concept.

Small, et al., (1980) reminds us that the difficulty for girls comes at adolescence, just when the independence, aggressiveness, and individual-achievement tendencies in boys begin to have more of a social payoff than previously. At this point, there is a double reason for girls not to change: In the first place, they generally have a long history of being rewarded for a nonassertive, conforming style; in the second place, the onset of puberty, with its heralding of adult sexuality and question of marriageability, tends to make both the youths and their parents more concerned with stressing differences, rather than similarities, between the sexes. As a result, most young women (even now) remain more oriented towards interpersonal than intellectual or professional achievements, and the minority who do venture into traditionally male enclaves do so very ambivalently, sensing that to achieve as a person may result in being considered a failure as a woman (Horner, 1972, cited in Small, et al., 1980). On the other hand, those who adopt more traditionally feminine roles do not, in general, feel any better about themselves for doing so. There is a fairly large body of literature documenting the greater social value placed by both sexes on most traditionally masculine (as opposed to feminine) characteristics and activities. Yet, when women describe themselves, both as they really are and as they perceive the feminine ideal to be, they incorporate all of the negatively perceived

traits ascribed to their own sex (such as dependence, irrationality, concern about appearance, lack of ambition and self-confidence)--traits that most clinicians consider to be unhealthy when used to describe an adult of *unspecified* sex (Broverman et al., cited in Small, et al., 1980). This negative self-image tends to persist throughout adulthood, including marriage, motherhood, and beyond, with accompanying indications of less-than-optimal mental health (Bernard cited in Small, et al., 1980). Indeed, there is another substantial body of literature documenting the regularity with which men attribute their accomplishments to personal, positive traits, such as ability and hard work, whereas women with objectively similar accomplishments tend to credit non-personal, external factors such as "luck" or "the ease of the task" (Deaux, cited in Small, et al., 1980). Women also express a greater lack of confidence than men in their *anticipated* performance on tasks (Maccoby and Jacklin, cited in Small, et al., 1980).

I feel that findings by researchers such as these reported above support Sanford and Donovan's (1984) four related premises regarding women's low self-esteem. For this reason my main research question is to what extent, if any, does the male-dominated Jewish-Christian Biblical heritage which both explicitly and implicitly places women in subordinate roles to men contribute to religious women's low self-esteem?

### Religions as Institutions, Spirituality as Experience

Sanford and Donovan (1984) believe that religious training provides us with answers to a variety of fundamental questions: Who am I? Why was I born? What

is the meaning of life? Is there a God and a purpose and order to the universe, or is the universe simply an accident of chemistry where randomness prevails? Is there life after death; if so, is there a heaven and a hell?: What is sin? What is goodness? What is my place, as an individual and as a woman, in this world? As our individual religious training shaped our answers to these and other questions, so the religion we were raised with also shaped, and probably continues to shape, the way we see and judge ourselves. For example, the values and ethical principles by which we judge ourselves good or bad, worthy or unworthy, tend to be determined in large part by our religious training.

They say that while many people claim to have rejected religion, it probably still affects us deeply. For as theologian Christ (1979, p. 162) observes:

"Religion fulfills deep psychic needs by providing symbols and rituals that enable people to cope with difficult situations in human life (death, evil, suffering) and to pass through life's important transitions (birth, sexuality, death). Even people who consider themselves completely secularized will often find themselves sitting in a church or synagogue when a friend or relation gets married or...has died. The symbols associated with these important rituals cannot fail to affect the deep or unconscious structures of the mind of even a person who has rejected these symbolism on a conscious level--especially if the person is under stress."

I believe that while any religion will influence self-esteem, those that have the largest impact on American women's self-esteem are Protestantism, Roman Catholicism and Judaism. In that order these are the most popular religions in the United States. If an American woman was brought up according to any religion, she was more than likely brought up as a member of one of them.



Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism all have the potential to affect women's lives in myriad positive ways. For example, although many intellectuals have scoffed at religions as "the opiate of the masses," many more people throughout history have found in Judaism and Christianity important sources of strength, solace and moral integrity that have inspired and enabled them to stand up against oppression and injustice. And despite the notion, again popular among many intellectuals, that religion is only for superstitious and sheep-like types of people with low levels of intelligence, the fact is that religious faith and intelligence are in no way incompatible. Many highly intelligent people are deeply religious because, in addition to the needs mentioned by Christ (1979, cited in Sanford & Donovan, 1984), religion fulfills a variety of other important needs many people feel urgently. These include the need for community, the need for rules, limits and a sense of order, the need for a sense of connection to something larger than oneself, the need for acknowledgment and expression of the spiritual aspects of being, the need for the mysteries of the universe and human existence to be acknowledged and explained, the need to come to terms in some way with the fact of mortality, and the need for a sense of purity and goodness.

Rizzuto (1979), a psychoanalyst, adds greatly to our understanding of the psychological need for a representation of God. She became interested in doing clinical research and theoretical thinking on the genesis of a person's representation of God in the course of their development and on the use of this representation by the individual during the life cycle. Her landmark book, The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study is the results of her clinical study of the possible origins of the

individual's private representation of God and its subsequent elaborations. It is also, she continues, a study of the relation existing in the secret chambers of the human heart between that God and the person who believes in God during the vicissitudes of that person's life cycle.

Rizzuto (1979) draws us into the relational-representational experience with objects which starts with the parents and reminds us that these images are not static entities, but rather that they are part and parcel of the ceaseless process of maintaining psychic balance. The very pressures of living makes us rework, over and over again, consciously and unconsciously, the memories of those we encountered at the beginning of our days. It is, she says, out of a complex matrix of facts and fantasies, wishes, hopes, and fears, in the exchanges with those incredible beings called parents, that the image of God is concocted. To this image is added the image of the God who is found in the family, offered by the parents, and by the institutional church, synagogue or other place of official ritual and worship. This complex is then reshaped, refined, and retouched throughout life.

Rizzuto's (1979) method of gathering information was to take a comprehensive life history from ten women and ten men. She includes in her book the questionnaire she used. Once she gathered this information, a chronological, developmental, comprehensive life history was written in the form of a biography on each subject. The main focus of attention was the object-related aspects of the subject's development. She paid special attention to the subject's identification with and representation of her/his parents and siblings, as well as one's own self-representation. All the subjects were asked to draw a family picture on the day of

entering the hospital and a drawing of God on the day they were discharged. She then related the formation of the image of God to the formation of the sense of self.

Rizzuto's (1979) conclusions from her study are myriad. She theorizes that God is a special transitional object which does not follow the usual course of other transitional objects which gradually are allowed to be decathected. God, on the other hand, is increasingly cathected, and cannot be fully repressed. As a transitional object representation, God is always potentially available for further acceptance or further rejection. It is this characteristic, the author says, of being always there for love, cold disdain, mistreatment, fear, hatred, or any other human emotion that lends the object God its psychic usefulness. Throughout life God remains a transitional object at the service of gaining leverage with oneself, with others, and with life itself. Rizzuto feels this is so because part of the God-representation is found in life and the other half comes from the child's capacity to create a God according to one's individual needs. Here I would add my understanding that those with a conscious spiritual orientation share the perception that human beings are made by God in the divine image, and, therefore would image themselves as spirit (Genesis 1:27). "So God created humankind in the divine image, in the image of God, God created them; male and female God created them." With this perspective our spirit nature, then, is integral to our beings and not just imaged from life experiences and the individual's needs. I agree with Rizzuto that the psychic process of creating and finding God never ceases in the course of human life. While many other mental representations are available in our culture, God has a special place, because our images of God are a



cultural creation offered to people for their private and public re-elaboration of those primary ties that accompany each of us unto the grave.

The author (Rizzuto, 1979) states that both the child's and the adult's sense of self and self-esteem is affected by these representations. For her, being our own creation, God will reflect what we have done, and affect our sense of ourselves. Assuredly, no human being can go from birth to death without having crises of rejection and acceptance in connection with real and transitional objects. All religions provide official or private rites of passage and symbolic modes to facilitate the resolution of these critical moments. Most of these dramatize the breaking of old bonds and the formation of new bonds between people. She feels that by making God an active participant in the process, ritual provides a new opportunity for the reshaping of the God-representation and the individual's relation to it.

In her conclusions, Rizzuto (1979) agrees with Freud in suggesting that God has her/his origins in parental imagoes and that God comes to the child in the time of resolution of the oedipal crisis. This implies, she says, that all children in the Western world form a God-representation--one that may later be used, neglected, or actively repressed. Rizzuto ends by stating that the accumulating data suggested a yet untapped well of insights into a person's struggle for psychic equilibrium. As a clinician it dawned on her that for years patients have been treated without therapists listening systematically to their expressed desires for closeness to God or avoidance of God. She reasoned that our ignorance of God's psychic role in an individual's life meant missing an important and relevant piece of information about a client's developmental history and their private elaborations of parental imagoes. She urges

other psychotherapists to explore the significance of God in the client's world of wishes, fears, hopes, and fantasies.

In my opinion Rizzuto's (1979) ground breaking work has important ramifications for women's self-esteem. She has concluded with Freud that "the idea of a single great god--an idea which must be recognized as a completely justified memory... has a compulsive character: it *must* be believed" (Freud, 1939, p. 130). I agree with them that human beings have no choice as to whether or not to incorporate a belief in a god into their self-perception. We are compelled to image a god of some sort or other not so much in the intellect but rather in our love objects (p. 212). The author and I both hope that psychotherapists will agree and take this knowledge into their practice for a deeper understanding of their client's being.

Randour (1987) expands on Rizzuto's study by including one of her own. Her findings are her book, entitled Women's Psyche, Women's Spirit: The Reality of Relationships. She writes from the perspective of a psychologist who believes that all of us seek meaning as part of our self-concept. We human beings are, she says, aware of our history, our mortality, and the possibilities for a future that we may not live to participate in but which we can imagine. As the makers of meaning, we ask the questions of ultimacy. As human beings, ours is the burden of understanding, of making meaning out of ourselves, out of our relationships with one another and with the world. In her remarkably intimate book, she tells us the spiritual stories of 94 women which she believes illustrate that seeking meaning in relationships is an essential part of our humanness.



As Randour (1987) views the developing self, she recounts that many of the women in her study describe a time or a process that challenged or developed their idea of who they were as a person, as a self. The largest number of women in this category, she says, who speak of self describe the emergence of a stronger and more complete sense of self as a spiritual experience. These *emerging* women speak of affirmation, wholeness, and of a more individuated self. Other women in a second group report *struggling* with an opposition or tension they feel between self and God, self and other. Thirdly, another group of older women show *resoluteness* in their conviction that their task is to submit to God's will. She says, these women do not talk about a need to find their "real self," instead they strive to turn themselves over to God's higher authority. The fourth and last group of women, defying usual categories of thought, speak in *mystical* language. These mystical women talk of being "in God", of moving toward God; they incorporate and identify with God.

As she summarizes findings from each of these groups of women, she notes that each seems to have made different psychological and theological interpretations of her experiences. Randour (1987) says however, that all chose to speak of a spiritual experience that referred to self. Both the *emerging* women and the *mystical* women ignored the demands for self-sacrifice and diminution; the former group eschewing traditional religious nomenclature, recognized self-assertion and self-definition as a spiritual process and the latter group gave up little power as they identified, or co-mingled self with others. These two groups of women seem to have reworked either or both the traditional conception of sin as assertion and pride and their sense of the



sex and nature of God, as they arrived at their own understandings. In the two other groups, the *struggling* and the *resolute* women have either accepted or are struggling with some of the traditional theological categories of sin and of God. Randour says that paralleling these theological categories, they also arrive at a different resolution in the psychological balance of self and other, gaining more of their sense of self by their unmodified identification with the other.

Randour (1987) calls upon feminist theologians and religious activists to understand at least some partial significance of this larger context in the formation of our God concepts, and our object and self representations. We can only guess, she says, about the effect a concept of God with a male gender, with all of the implications that carries, has on a female's formation of self. We can be confident, however, that how we think about the sex of God will have a notable influence on our sense of self. Randour speculates that living within a world logic that dichotomizes many human characteristics along gender lines, a female learns that she is of a sex that does not lead others into areas of creation where creative work is done. By deduction, the young female may come to understand that not just her sex lacks these grand capacities, but she does as well. McDargh (1983, cited in Randour, 1987) notes that sometimes the accumulated weight of intellectual evidence about the concept of God diminishes the significance of a person's God-representation. Although some disharmony will be tolerated for a awhile between a concept of God, and one's representation of God and self, eventually we demand congruence. We may achieve this by discarding our original ideas about God in favor of a new concept of God and a new sense of self. Randour says her results show that some women in

her study have left traditional religion behind, finding it impossible to integrate that concept of God with a new self-integrity. Others, she observes, allow a reformulation of this object-representation of God that matches the revised concept of God and of self. And, she laments, in the face of a conceptual challenge, some women may sacrifice self-development in favor of maintaining their current concept of God.

I take the position along with others (Randour, 1987; Rizzuto, 1979; Sanford and Donovan, 1984) that religion deeply affects our self-concept. I am testing the self-esteem of both religious women who have a feminist knowledge and self-understanding and those who do not. The two groups I have selected are seminarians who presumably have read both the feminist and the patriarchal interpretations of the Biblical passages and theological constructs with which I am concerned and contrasting these women to religious lay women who presumably have not. In this way I may be able to support my hypothesis that religious women who have a feminist self-concept have reworked their concept of self and of God in ways that allow them to have a healthy level of self-esteem while those religious women who have not will have a lower self-esteem.

### Self-Esteem and Women's Psychological Development

A number of clinicians have written extensively about the ways in which women's self-esteem develops. Since from the moment of birth, a female's experience in society is different than males, psychotherapists need to ask how the experience of being subordinate to men effects women's development in order to

better understand the various ramifications of the psychological distress of their women clients.

In her ground breaking book Toward a New Psychology of Women, J. B. Miller (1976) looks at women's psychology from the psychoanalytic perspective. Currently, she is the Founder and Director of The Stone Center for Psychological Research at Wellesley College, Wellesley MA. She believes that humanity has been held to a limited and distorted view of itself--from its interpretation of the most intimate of personal emotions to its grandest vision of human possibilities--precisely by virtue of its subordination of women. She goes on to say that as women's perceptions arise alongside of men's understandings, the total vision of human possibilities enlarges and is transformed. In this way the old is being severely challenged.

J. B. Miller, (1976) looks at women as a subordinate group in a male-dominated society. She examines female psychology from the perspective of women being socialized to be dependent, always seeking male approval because subordinates always need the approval of dominantes to gain self-esteem, and in struggling with extreme conflict between achieving intimacy and achievement needs, as well as the connection of women's depression to their inability to express anger.

In discussing women's sense of self, J. B. Miller (1976) points out that women do not come into a sense of self in the same way that men do. Women do not have the right or the requirement to become full-fledged representatives of the culture, nor have they been granted the right to act and to judge their own actions in terms of the direct benefit to themselves. This does not mean that women do not have organizing



principles or relate to a "reality" in a particular way. But women's reality is rooted in forming themselves into the person who will be of benefit to others. Thus they see their own actions only as these actions are mediated through others. Since this experience begins at birth and continues through life women develop a psychic structuring for which the term "ego" as ordinarily used may not be applied.

Beyond inequality, J. B. Miller (1976) points out, women have a further, more complex relation to male society. Women have not only been treated as unequals--in many ways like other groups of people socially defined as subordinate--but they also have been sustaining a special, more total dynamic. Women have played a specific role in male-led society in ways no other suppressed groups have done. They have been entwined with men in intimate and intense relationships, creating the milieu--the family--in which the human mind as we know it has been formed. Thus, J. B. Miller asserts, women's situation is a crucial key to understanding the psychological order.

J. B. Miller (1976) tells us that it was Bernard S. Robbins who first advanced the idea that women's psychological characteristics are closer to certain psychological essentials and are, therefore, both sources of strength and the basis of a more advanced form of living. She labels these characteristics "strengths". However, they have been called "weaknesses" and even women, themselves, have so interpreted them. That very designation has been part of the devaluation and obscurantism associated with them, and has been the cause of women's low self-esteem. She states that these topics are issues of central discourse in the current stage of psychoanalytic thought. These topics are concerned with the origins and nature of human beings' most basic sense of connection with other human beings. These major topics are the

so-called "dependency needs", the development of autonomy and/or independence, and the issues of basic feelings of weakness and vulnerability.

These qualities are those that are presently more highly developed in women as a group. It is most important to emphasize that these psychological characteristics are in all instances two-sided. In a situation of inequality and powerlessness, these characteristics can lead to subservience and to complex psychological problems. On the other hand, she says, the dialogue is always with the future. These same characteristics represent potentials that can provide a new framework, one which would have to be inevitably different from that of the dominant male society.

I find J. B. Miller's insights profoundly important for the well-being of humanity. Her perception that women have a more highly developed sense of the qualities regarding the origins and nature of human beings' most basic sense of connection with other human beings lies at the heart of several of the Biblical passages and theological constructs that I will be measuring (Solidarity of all humanity; Yahwist Temptation and Fall Myth in Genesis 3 as interpreted by Tribble; The Doctrine of Mary if interpreted that all people need the attributes of passivity, compassion and receptivity; Women as paradigms of true discipleship in the Gospels of Mark and John). It will be interesting to see if my results demonstrate that those women who positively value these kinds of connections measure higher in self-esteem than those who devalue or disagree with them.

In their new book, Understanding Women: A Feminist Psychoanalytic Approach, Eichenbaum and Orbach (1983) discuss women's psychological development, its themes and consequences in regard to self-esteem. They are co-



directors of The Women's Therapy Centre Institute in New York and founders of The Women's Therapy Centre in London. Their book is a refinement and expansion of the lectures they offered as a training program for practicing psychotherapists, psychiatric social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and counselors in 1978. The material draws on their years of psychotherapy with women.

Eichenbaum and Orbach (1983) remind us that women's psychology is one of unclear boundaries, of an insecure or illusive sense of self. They remind us that women often search for themselves in their relationships with others, seeking definition in contact. The central aspect of women's psychology, the one that embodies most of the major themes, is the *lack of psychological separateness*, the absence of boundaries within which a secure sense of self is contained.

Eichenbaum & Orbach, (1983) point out that girls are taught to be aware of the ways in which their actions affect others, and as a result become cautious about their actions. They almost always bear someone else in mind when they make their decisions about appropriate behavior. They rarely experience encouragement and support for gestures of autonomy. More often than not, girls move out into the world accompanied by prohibitions, cautions, restrictions, and fear rather than expectations of success and acceptance. They are praised and supported for behavior that expresses concern, thoughtfulness, and care for others. They are told they are being selfish when they direct this same energy toward themselves.

These authors (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983) feel that women's second-class position in patriarchal culture is painfully reflected in their psychology. Women do not feel whole, confident in themselves, they feel less than equal, like children, not



adults, powerless, over-dependent, passive, imprisoned by their anger and by clouds of depression that often surround them. These feelings are expressed in insecurity, lack of entitlement, abandonment, and anger which are distorted and converted into feelings of competition, envy, guilt and depression, which in turn lead to further self-condemnation. On the one hand women yearn for achievement and fulfillment, and on the other they are caught by their own internal restraints and prohibitions. They are caught in an internal world in which their defenses entrap their yearnings for nurturance, acceptance, love and autonomy.

In summary, Eichenbaum and Orbach (1983) point out that guilt, difficulties with anger, and preponderance of depression in women have their roots in early psychological development and should be viewed from an analysis of women's search for acceptance, for adequate and consistent relating, and for an integrated self.

In my opinion many of these painful psychological feelings for religious women may be caused by the internalization into their self-concept of some of the Biblical passages and theological constructs which I am measuring. These are some examples:

i.e. 1 Corinthians 11:7a-9 ...since he (man) is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.; Ephesians 5: 22-24: Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.; Colossians 3: 18: Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 1 Peter 3: 1-2: Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won

over without a word by their wives conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives; 1 Timothy 2: 15: ...she (women) will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love, and holiness, with modesty. Titus 2: 3-5: Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited.)

It will be of interest to see if my results show that those women who obey the Biblical injunctions to be subordinate and submissive have a lower self-esteem than those who do not.

Since some of the Biblical material that I am researching has to do with women either taking leadership roles in the church or being silent and submissive in the church, Betz's (1984) study on women's career patterns and self-esteem is noteworthy.

Betz (1984) tested career patterns in women's lives based on Maslow's (1954, 1970 cited in Betz) theory of human motivation. Briefly, Maslow proposed that five basic needs are essential to optimal human existence. He arranged these needs in an hierarchy from low to high. Lower order needs included physiological and safety needs followed by social needs. Higher order needs included self-esteem and self-actualization. Betz obtained material from 474 college educated women. Her findings have some meaningful implications for women's career development processes. Most obvious is the fact that homemakers have less likelihood of need deficiency in the area of security-safety and autonomy, but their self-esteem needs are less likely to be met than if they were to work outside their homes. Women in

professional-managerial fields are less fulfilled in security-safety autonomy needs but have higher fulfillment in esteem, self actualization and life satisfaction ( $p < .01$ ).

The findings suggest that, at least for those who are college graduates, opportunity for self-actualization plays an important role in life satisfaction. For others such needs as safety-security autonomy, and self-esteem should also be given consideration in accessing career alternatives.

Betz's (1984) findings have implications for my study since all of the seminarians I am testing in my research have made the choice for careers outside of their homes in direct defiance of several of the Biblical passages which I have used in my measures, for example the following:

1 Corinthians 14: 34-35: ...women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

1 Timothy 2: 11-14: Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

The demographic data taken on all my subjects indicates how many of them are working outside of their homes. It is interesting to note the correlations between those who work outside of their homes and those who do not in respect to self-esteem.



## Some Empirical Research on Women's Self-Esteem and Religious Attitudes

Morgan (1987) notes for us that there is an apparent growing significance of religion in American life. Her study addresses the general problem of the relationship between religious orientation and gender-related attitudes and behaviors. She examined variation over a range of dimensions of gender role attitudes held by 325 women in predominantly female and predominantly male college majors using religious devoutness and other variables including self-esteem as predictors. To measure gender role attitudes, a thirty-item sex-role attitude scale (SRAS) by Osmond and Martin, 1975 was used because its four subscales measured different dimensions of sexual attitudes. In addition the Gender Role Preference Scale (Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980) containing five items was used to measure attitudes towards the role of wife. All five gender role attitudes measures were marked on five-point Likert-type scales.

Five distinct dimensions of gender-role attitudes were used:

- (a.) familial roles, i.e., mothers' and fathers' roles pertaining to household division of labor and care of children;
- (b.) extra-familial roles, i.e., roles of men and women regarding career commitment, decision-making, and leadership ability;
- (c.) male/female stereotypes, i.e., beliefs about the innate characteristics of men and women such as male superiority and female dependency;
- (d.) social change as related to sex roles, i.e., changes in social structure necessary for equality in male/female roles such as equal pay and equal job

opportunities (Osmond & Martin, 1975); and gender-role preferences for role of wife, i.e., the role of a woman in relationship to her husband when she is working outside the home (Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980).

Religious devoutness was measured by a Guttman-type scale of religious commitment (Connecticut Mutual, 1981). This multi-item index is based on how frequently respondents engage in religious activities and experience religious feelings. Unlike other instruments that measure church attendance or denominational preference, this measures the depth of an individual's religious commitment. A personality-style scale (Elias, 1979) containing 40 adjectives marked on a 5-point Likert-type scale was used to measure assertiveness and responsiveness.

Assertiveness items characterized task functions and included bold, controlled, determined, direct, forceful, and precise. Responsiveness items referred to people-oriented characteristics and included adaptable, friendly, giving, loyal, respectful, and trusting. Self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg (1965) scale.

Morgan (1987) notes that past research shows higher self-esteem to be related to non-traditional attitudes towards women (Harrison, Guy & Lupfer, 1981; Zuckerman, 1980 as cited in Morgan, p. 303). Her results indicate that self-esteem is positively ( $p < .001$ ) related to the gender-role preference of wife becoming more non-traditional. Further, she demonstrates that religious devoutness is the most important variable ( $p < .001$ ) among all those which she utilized in consistently predicting gender-role attitudes. The negative relationship reveals that as religious devoutness increases, gender-role attitudes become more traditional ( $p < .001$ ). In addition to religious devoutness, other factors significantly ( $p < .01$ ) related to

attitudes toward societal change regarding sex roles were assertiveness and mother's employment. These two factors were positively related ( $p < .01$ ) to social change showing that as assertiveness and the likelihood of mother working outside the home for pay increased, attitudes toward social change regarding sex roles became more non-traditional.

Morgan's findings add weight to my overall conclusion that where women's religious devoutness is not combined with a feminist consciousness regarding Scriptural passages and theological constructs that speak to the role of women, traditional gender-based attitudes and behaviors will be more prevalent.

Himmelstein's (1986) study sought to investigate the social basis of anti-feminism as it relates to religious networks and culture. He used abortion rights and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as the two sets of women's issues that focus on the intense political conflict of our day.

Himmelstein (1986) discusses the theory that relates anti-feminism to female dependency. According to Himmelstein the theory is that women who are most powerless and most dependent on men, objectively and subjectively are those most likely to oppose ERA and abortion. Therefore, opposition to ERA and abortion should also correlate with low levels of personal and political self-confidence and a strong sense of dependency on men. However, Himmelstein's findings refute this theory. From his review of the sociological literature on the topic, he concludes that what distinguishes supporters of ERA and abortion from opponents is neither social position nor personal dependency, but different cultural assumptions about the



importance of family and the network of relationships that develop in the private sphere to the happiness and safety of women.

Himmelstein (1986) is a sociologist and uses the method of analyzing an enormous amount of sociological research in summarizing his findings. From his analysis of the literature he determines that religious persons are more likely to oppose ERA and abortion because they possess a culture that sanctions traditional family relationships and women's roles, and because they are integrated into religious networks that make them relatively accessible to ANTI-movements. Specifically, the pattern he discerns emerging from the sociological research suggests a broad world view. Generally, anti-ERA women approve of proposals aimed at providing women a greater role in the public sphere (equal pay, electing more women, encouraging women in the professions, showing more competent women on TV) but they oppose those proposals that attack the traditional sexual division of labor or the coherence and autonomy of the family (day care, abortion, paternity leave, more sexual freedom). They also reject proposals that symbolically undermine the traditional image of women (using Ms., keeping one's maiden name, playing on boys' teams). In short, anti-ERA women accept a greater role for women in work and politics, but refuse any correlative changes in women's role in the family.

Himmelstein's (1986) analysis of anti-feminist writings (Dworkin, 1983, cited in Himmelstein, 1986) and intensive interviews with anti-ERA activists (Mathews & Mathews, 1982, cited in Himmelstein, 1986) convey a sense of female vulnerability that is wrapped up with this personal conservatism. From this perspective, women live in a dangerous, male-dominated world, in which their only protection are the

family, the protection they can claim therein, and the relationships with other women that emerge from family and community ties. Anything that seems to challenge these protection directly or indirectly by asserting a non-family-oriented identity for women appears as dangerous and hurtful to women. Both ERA and abortion weaken or seem to weaken the special privileges available to women and the private sphere within which these privileges reside. Women, then may oppose ERA and abortion quite independently of personal circumstances or feelings because they participate in a culture that pictures women in general as dependent and vulnerable, sanctions the family and traditional gender roles as a haven for women in a male world. This culture, Himmelstein points out, flourishes in networks of religiously involved persons and depends less on self-interest and personal circumstances and more on long-standing values and collective judgments.

The research determined for Himmelstein (1986) that frequent Church attendance most likely indicated a commitment to Christian doctrine which generally stresses beliefs about life, sexuality and gender-roles that are conducive to anti-feminism. While he does not do a multi-variate analysis to determine whether a commitment to doctrine leads to anti-feminism or religious networks leads to anti-feminism, he points out that his paper is intended to merely draw and focus attention to the often ignored empirical relationship between Church attendance and anti-feminism as well as to offer some theoretical speculation about it. Whatever the explanation upon which one settles, Himmelstein concludes that the central point is that Church attendance is generally more strongly related to anti-feminist beliefs than are education, income, occupational status, class, age, residence, and most other



social traits. What seems most salient is the fact of religious involvement. For women, their own personal situation and experience also seems not to the point. What matters is less one's specific dependence on men and more one's sense of the generic relationship between women and men. What matters is shared culture, not personal psychology.

Himmelstein's (1986) conclusions indicate to me that in a patriarchally sanctioned religious culture, many women may base their self-esteem on their protected role as wife and mother in the family even though it is a subordinate role to their husbands and sons because they fear the loss of the special right to be supported by men and fear being forced into a work world dominated by men and male values. I hope my research will show that from a Biblical perspective, women's self-esteem in all spheres of life can be based on equality and not on fear of domination.

Long and Heggen (1988) studied perceptions of what constitutes spiritual health, specifically as viewed by the clergy. Their study investigates the perceptions of clergy on spiritual health as it pertains to the ideal for adults, adult men, and adult women. The clergy participants were 76 men and 1 woman. Their results demonstrated that differential standards of spiritual health exist for men and women, as perceived by clergy, just as Broverman et al. (1970) found that differential standards of mental health existed for men and women as perceived by mental health professionals. The 32 descriptive items in the profile of what constitutes spiritual health is significantly ( $p < .05$  or  $p < .01$ ) different depending upon the sex of the person being described. The finding also indicate that although substantial differences are seen between ideal spiritual health for adults and spiritual health for women,



spiritual health for men was viewed as virtually identical to ideal spiritual health. Consequently, the findings suggest that not only are the profiles of spiritual health significantly (either at the .05 or .01 levels) different for men and women, but that the profile for men is the profile valued as the ideal.

The descriptor items on which women rated very high (1.00 to .72) were "submissive in the home", "enjoys teaching children in Church", "has domestic skills", "gentle, soft-spoken", "spouse makes decisions", "seeks advice from others", "comfortable following in Church" and "provides emotionally for family". In contrast the descriptor items on which women rated very low (0.00 to 0.16) were "provides financially", "fair and just", "dominant in the home", "has marketable skills", "forceful", "makes decisions for spouse", and "dispassionate". Long and Heggen's (1988) study bears implications for the current view male clergy (76 of the 77 clergy participants were men) have of women parishioners' spiritual health. It also supports my view that without a feminist perspective, religious women may not be spiritually healthy precisely because they have incorporated a self-image based on Biblical passages and theological constructs that promote the subordination of women.

Postovoi's (1990) investigation presents an initial effort to measure patriarchal Christian beliefs and to compare these beliefs with conservative, traditional, female behavior and liberal, egalitarian female behavior. Her subjects were 50 Anglo, Hispanic, Black, and Asian-American Christian women who ranged in age from 18 to 65. She used the Attitudes Toward Christian Women Scale (ACWS), an instrument measuring attitudes or beliefs and the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) (Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1973) an instrument measuring attitudes and behaviors.

An inter-item correlation of the ACWS resulting in 5 subscales: female physical and emotional independence, female submissiveness and guilt, female innate and demonstrated efficacy, martyrdom and God's nature. With the exception of the subscale measuring female submissiveness and guilt, all of the ACWS subscales correlated with the sum of the AWS.

Regarding Postovoi's (1990) design, in the development of ACWS the initial step was to establish a pool of statements drawn from a wide variety of historical and modern theological materials on Christian womanhood. This initial pool was then separately reviewed for content validity by the investigator and three doctoral student peers, all of whom have extensive experience in the areas of theology of women and domestic violence. The thirty-four statements agreed upon were then reworded as necessary to obtain a counter balanced 6 point Likert scale. Further modification was done to obtain a readability level of "fairly easy" (Flesh, 1948, cited in Postovoi). Next, items which were unclear to a four woman panel of both "psychologically sophisticated and unsophisticated" women as judged by the investigator were clarified and restated in the questionnaire.

Postovoi's (1990) results significant at  $p < .05$  suggest that patriarchal attitudes of women are strongly related to their traditional or egalitarian societal role behavior. The results emphasize the importance of considering how individuals' religious interpretations affect their day to day routines and their expectations for themselves and their relationships. She notes that of particular interest is the aspect of patriarchal belief dictating female submissiveness and guilt. This investigation suggests that this variable is not a reliable predictor of either traditional or liberal

female behavior in society. Thus a women may be an uneducated homemaker or a well-educated professional and experience a similar belief that she is guilty and ought to be submissive to her husband.

The author (Postovoit, 1990) says that it often appears that some Christian women who maintain a patriarchal hierarchical world view do not perceive themselves as victims or potential victims. Rather they see their subservient behavior as fulfilling their special calling as part of God's male dominated kingdom. Many Christian writers have noted that many women have come to believe that their martyr-behavior towards their violent husbands will cause a miraculous change in the husband and bring the devoted wife heavenly rewards. (Andelin, 1975, Hancock, 1975, Miles, 1975). These contemporary authors often imply that a husband's aggression is due to his wife's sin and that the wife should be eternally forgiving, that marriage is the proper vocation for a Christian woman, and that the woman who rebels against her lower status in marriage is sinful.

Postovoit (1990) notes further that research also suggests women who have been subjected to a higher degree of patriarchal socialization patterns are more likely to have low self-esteem, to become targets of spousal abuse and have the most difficulty escaping the victimization of being a battered woman (Spence, 1975, Walker, 1977-78, Wetzel & Ross, 1983). As Doran, 1980 (cited in Postovoit, 1990) notes, the Christian abused wife may not perceive her response to stay in a violent relationship as helpless or masochistic, but may perceive her ability to endure her husband's violence as evidence of her moral strength. Her low self-esteem may lead her to doubt that she has anything to offer a more highly functioning man but with



this "impulse-ridden, dependent man, she is secure that he needs what she has to offer"(p. 1). Doran adds that women who have advocated this "missionary position" see themselves as totally responsible for the emotional well-being of their husbands. Often patriarchally oriented ministers may counsel women to forgive their husbands in order to improve or change her husbands behavior for the better, pointing out that her biblical duty to submit to such abuse is God's will for them (Mollenkott, 1982, cited in Postovoit).

Of all the measures I considered using, the Attitudes Towards Christian Women Scale (ACWS) promised to be most helpful in my research. I needed to add items that relate specifically to the Biblical passages and theological constructs that I determined as central to the matter of women's self-concept. Since many of the items Postovoit (1990) included come from the same material I used, I followed her design and procedure of item selection and wording.

To summarize, the empirical research which I have cited shows that religious attitudes plays an important role in women's self-esteem. The task I set before myself is to do an investigation on the relationship between selected Biblical passages and theological constructs that refer to women's role, spiritual well-being and self-esteem. Let us turn our attention now to the measures and procedures I intend to use.

## CHAPTER 3

### PROCEDURES

In this chapter, the method of investigation used in conducting this research in order to measure the relationship between Christian women's self-esteem, their spiritual well-being, and their feminist/patriarchal attitudes as well as their knowledge regarding the Biblical passages and theological constructs will be discussed.

#### Research Questions

The main research questions which guided this study included:

1. How does Christian women's knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC) relate to their self-esteem as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)?
2. How do Christian women's patriarchal and feminist attitudes as measured by the Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS) relate to their knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC).
3. How do Christian women's patriarchal and feminist attitudes as measured by the Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS) relate to their self-esteem as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)?
4. How do Christian women's sense of spiritual well-being as measured by the Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS) relate to their knowledge of selected

Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC)?

5. How do Christian women's sense of spiritual well-being as measured by the Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS) relate to their self-esteem as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)?

Four additional questions will be used to gather further information:

6. How do Christian women's patriarchal and feminist attitudes as measured by the Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS) relate to their sense of spiritual well-being as measured by the Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS)?

7. How do the number of women's studies courses taken by the participants relate to their knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC), self-esteem, as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS), patriarchal and feminist attitudes, as measured by the Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS), and spiritual well-being, as measured by the Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS)?

8. How do the number of Bible courses taken by the participants relate to their knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC), self-esteem, as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS), patriarchal and feminist attitudes, as measured by the Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS), and spiritual well-being, as measured by the Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS)?



9. Are there differences between parishioners and seminarians on the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC), the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS); the Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS), and the Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS)?

### Subjects

Two groups of Christian women participated in this investigation.

Seminarian Group: The Seminarians consisted of seventy-eight women who had completed at least one full year of academic work in main line Protestant seminaries in urban centers in the Northeastern United States. This group was chosen because there was a high probability that these Seminarians would be familiar with both the androcentric and feminist analyses of the Biblical passages and theological constructs which were being measured.

The background data for the subjects is presented in Tables 1 through 8. Frequencies and percentages are included for each characteristic. Regarding age, forty percent of the Seminarians fell into the age group between twenty and thirty with the age group of thirty-one to forty comprising twenty-one percent and the age group forty-one to fifty comprising twenty-eight percent. So eighty-nine percent of the Seminarian population ranged from age twenty through fifty. (See Table 1 at page 90).

Regarding occupation, fifty-four percent of the Seminarians were full-time students while twenty-two percent classified themselves as either professionals or skilled workers. (See Table 2 at page 91).

While all of the Seminarians were from main line Protestant denominations, forty-one percent were Episcopalian, twenty-nine percent were either United Church of Christ/ Congregationalist and Methodists, while thirty-percent were from a variety of other Protestant denominations. (See Table 3 at page 92).

The educational level of the Seminarians was very high. Forty-seven percent had bachelor's degrees and forty-eight percent had master's degrees in a variety of different fields; twenty-six of those in theology and/or divinity while five percent have Ph.D's or LLD's. (See Table 4 at page 93).

On the optional question of sexual preference, eighty percent of the Seminarians were heterosexual and fourteen percent either lesbian or bi-sexual. (See Table 5 at page 94).

The marital status of the Seminarians was about half single (fifty-four percent) while the rest were either married, separated or divorced. (See Table 6 at page 95).

Regarding the number of Biblical courses taken by Seminarians ninety-nine percent had taken four or five and only one had taken only three. (See Table 7 at page 96).

Only forty-six percent of Seminarians had not taken any women's studies courses while the remainder had taken three to six or more. (See Table 8 at page 97).

Parishioner Group: The group of Parishioners consisted of seventy-eight lay women who were members of main line Protestant parishes. The Parishioners were chosen from the same denominational groups as the Seminarians. They came from suburban parishes in the Northeastern United States. This group was chosen for

**Table 1**  
**Age of Parishioners and Seminarians**

| Character-<br>istic | Parishioners |            | Seminarians |            | Combined   |            |
|---------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                     | N            | %          | N           | %          | N          | %          |
| <b>Age</b>          |              |            |             |            |            |            |
| 20-30               | 1            | 1          | 31          | 40         | 32         | 21         |
| 31-40               | 6            | 8          | 16          | 21         | 22         | 14         |
| 41-50               | 26           | 33         | 22          | 28         | 48         | 31         |
| 51-60               | 20           | 26         | 7           | 9          | 27         | 17         |
| 61-70               | 19           | 24         | 2           | 3          | 21         | 14         |
| 71-80               | 6            | 8          | 0           | 0          | 6          | 4          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>78</b>    | <b>---</b> | <b>78</b>   | <b>---</b> | <b>156</b> | <b>---</b> |

Total N = 156

Note: Percents may not add up to 100 due to rounding.



**Table 2**  
**Occupation of Parishioners and Seminarians**

| Character-<br>istic       | Parishioners |            | Seminarians |            | Combined   |            |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                           | N            | %          | N           | %          | N          | %          |
| <b>Occupation</b>         |              |            |             |            |            |            |
| Professional              | 16           | 21         | 8           | 10         | 24         | 14         |
| Skilled<br>Worker         | 23           | 30         | 9           | 12         | 32         | 21         |
| Clerical                  | 8            | 10         | 5           | 6          | 13         | 8          |
| Housewife                 | 22           | 28         | 1           | 1          | 23         | 15         |
| Clergy                    | 1            | 1          | 3           | 4          | 4          | 3          |
| Seminarian<br>(full-time) | 0            | 0          | 42          | 54         | 42         | 27         |
| Student                   | 3            | 4          | 1           | 1          | 4          | 3          |
| Not<br>Specified          | 4            | 5          | 8           | 10         | 12         | 6          |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>61</b>    | <b>---</b> | <b>69</b>   | <b>---</b> | <b>134</b> | <b>---</b> |

Total N = 156

Note: Percents may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

**Table 3**  
**Denomination of Parishioners and Seminarians**

| Character-<br>istic         | Parishioners |     | Seminarians |     | Combined |     |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-----|-------------|-----|----------|-----|
|                             | N            | %   | N           | %   | N        | %   |
| <b>Denominations</b>        |              |     |             |     |          |     |
| Episco-<br>palian           | 37           | 47  | 32          | 41  | 69       | 44  |
| UCC-<br>Congre-<br>gational | 20           | 26  | 15          | 19  | 35       | 22  |
| Methodist                   | 17           | 22  | 8           | 10  | 25       | 16  |
| Other<br>Protestant         | 4            | 5   | 23          | 30  | 27       | 18  |
| <b>Total</b>                | 78           | --- | 78          | --- | 156      | --- |

Total N = 156

Note: Percents may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

**Table 4**  
**Education of Parishioners and Seminarians**

| Character-<br>istic              | Parishioners |            | Seminarians |            | Combined   |            |
|----------------------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                                  | N            | %          | N           | %          | N          | %          |
| <b>Education</b>                 |              |            |             |            |            |            |
| High School                      | 1            | 1          | 0           | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Associates Degree                | 7            | 9          | 0           | 0          | 7          | 5          |
| Bachelors Degree                 | 35           | 45         | 37          | 47         | 72         | 46         |
| Masters                          | 26           | 33         | 17          | 22         | 43         | 28         |
| Masters in Theology/<br>Divinity | 1            | 1          | 20          | 26         | 21         | 14         |
| Ph.D./LLD                        | 7            | 9          | 4           | 5          | 11         | 6          |
| Not Specified                    | 1            | 1          | 0           | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>78</b>    | <b>---</b> | <b>78</b>   | <b>---</b> | <b>156</b> | <b>---</b> |

Note: Percents may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Total N = 156



**Table 5**  
**Sexual Preferences of Parishioners and Seminarians**

| Character-<br>istic                  | Parishioners |     | Seminarians |     | Combined |     |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-----|-------------|-----|----------|-----|
|                                      | N            | %   | N           | %   | N        | %   |
| <b>Sexual Preferences (Optional)</b> |              |     |             |     |          |     |
| Hetero-<br>sexual                    | 63           | 81  | 62          | 80  | 125      | 80  |
| Homo-<br>sexual -<br>Lesbian         | 1            | 1   | 8           | 10  | 9        | 6   |
| Bisexual                             | 1            | 1   | 3           | 4   | 4        | 3   |
| Not<br>Specified                     | 13           | 17  | 5           | 6   | 18       | 12  |
| Total                                | 78           | --- | 78          | --- | 156      | --- |

Total N = 156

Note: Percents may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

**Table 6**  
**Marital Status of Parishioners and Seminarians**

| Character-<br>istic    | Parishioners |            | Seminarians |            | Combined   |            |
|------------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                        | N            | %          | N           | %          | N          | %          |
| <b>Marital Status</b>  |              |            |             |            |            |            |
| Single                 | 7            | 9          | 42          | 54         | 49         | 31         |
| Married                | 55           | 81         | 26          | 33         | 81         | 52         |
| Separated/<br>Divorced | 9            | 12         | 9           | 12         | 18         | 12         |
| Widow                  | 7            | 9          | 1           | 1          | 8          | 5          |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>78</b>    | <b>---</b> | <b>78</b>   | <b>---</b> | <b>156</b> | <b>---</b> |

Total N = 156

Note: Percents may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

**Table 7**  
**Number of Biblical Courses Taken**  
**by Parishioners and Seminarians**

| Character-<br>istic                     | Parishioners |            | Seminarians |            | Combined   |            |
|---|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
|   | N            | %          | N           | %          | N          | %          |
| <b>Number of Biblical Courses Taken</b> |              |            |             |            |            |            |
| 0                                       | 23           | 30         | 0           | 0          | 23         | 15         |
| 1                                       | 1            | 1          | 0           | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| 2                                       | 0            | 0          | 0           | 0          | 0          | 0          |
| 3                                       | 30           | 40         | 1           | 1          | 31         | 20         |
| 4                                       | 10           | 13         | 9           | 12         | 19         | 12         |
| 5                                       | 9            | 12         | 68          | 87         | 77         | 49         |
| 6 or more                               | 3            | 1          | 0           | 0          | 3          | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>76</b>    | <b>---</b> | <b>78</b>   | <b>---</b> | <b>154</b> | <b>---</b> |

Total N = 156

Note: Percents may not add up to 100 due to rounding.



**Table 8**  
**Number of Women Studies Courses Taken**  
**by Parishioners and Seminarians**

| Character-<br>istic                          | Parishioners |            | Seminarians |            | Combined   |            |
|--|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
|  | N            | %          | N           | %          | N          | %          |
| <b>Number of Women Studies Courses Taken</b> |              |            |             |            |            |            |
| 0  | 64           | 82         | 36          | 46         | 100        | 64         |
| 1  | 0            | 0          | 0           | 0          | 0          | 0          |
| 2  | 0            | 0          | 0           | 0          | 0          | 0          |
| 3  | 6            | 8          | 17          | 22         | 23         | 15         |
| 4  | 4            | 5          | 6           | 8          | 10         | 6          |
| 5  | 2            | 3          | 13          | 17         | 15         | 10         |
| 6 or more                                    | 0            | 0          | 6           | 8          | 6          | 4          |
| Not<br>Specified                             | 2            | 3          | 0           | 0          | 2          | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>78</b>    | <b>---</b> | <b>78</b>   | <b>---</b> | <b>156</b> | <b>---</b> |

Total N = 156

Note: Percents may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

contrast to the Seminarians because it was assumed that most Parishioners would not know the feminist reconstruction on the selected Biblical passages and theological constructs which were being measured. Tables 1 through 8 show the demographic information regarding the Parishioners.

The largest group of Parishioners were age forty-one to fifty (thirty-three percent). The next highest groups were twenty-six percent in the fifty-one to sixty age group and twenty-four percent in the sixty-one to seventy age group. (See Table 1 at page 90).

Regarding occupations, the highest percentage came from the skilled worker category (thirty percent), while twenty-eight percent were housewives, twenty-one percent professionals and ten percent clerical workers. (See Table 2 at page 91).

The denominational preference for the Parishioners was forty-seven percent Episcopalians. The United Church of Christ/Congregationalist were twenty-six percent while the Methodist were twenty-two percent. (See Table 3 at page 92).

Regarding education, forty-five percent of the Parishioners have bachelor's degrees while thirty-four percent have master's degrees and nine percent Ph.D's or LLD's. (See Table 4 at page 93).

The optional question on sexual preference showed that eighty-one percent were heterosexual. (See Table 5 at page 94).

Regarding marital status eighty-one percent of the Parishioners were married while twenty-one percent was separated, divorced or widowed and only nine percent were single. (See Table 6 at page 95).

Concerning the number of Biblical courses taken, thirty percent of the Parishioners had not taken any biblical courses while sixty-five percent had taken three to five biblical courses. (See Table 7 at page 96).

When it comes to women's studies courses, eighty-two percent of the Parishioners had not taken any women's studies courses while sixteen percent had taken three, four or five courses. (See Table 8 at page 97).

Combined Group: Focusing on the combined sample, it can be seen that the largest age group was forty-fifty (thirty-one percent). The second largest group was twenty through thirty (twenty-one percent). The age range of the combined sample was twenty to eighty years old. (See Table 1 at page 90)

Full-time Seminarian was the occupation which had the largest representation in the sample (twenty-seven percent). Skilled worker (twenty-one percent) and Housewife (fifteen percent) were the occupations of the next two largest groups. (See Table 2 at page 91).

Episcopalian was the largest denomination (forty-four percent) with United Church of Christ/Congregational and Methodist being the next two largest denominational groups (twenty-two percent and sixteen percent respectively). (See Table 3 at page 92).

On the whole the combined sample was well educated: Forty-six percent had Bachelor's Degrees and forty-two percent had some type of Master's Degree. (See Table 4 at page 93).



On an optional demographic question, eighty percent of the combined sample reported their sexual preference as heterosexual; nine percent were homosexual-lesbian or bisexual. (See Table 5 at page 94).

About half (fifty-two percent) of the respondents were married; (thirty-one percent) were single; and (twelve percent) were separated or divorced. (See Table 6 at page 95).

Of the combined sample (eighty-four percent) had taken a Biblical course. About half (forty-nine percent) had taken five courses. (See Table 7 at page 96).

Slightly more than one-third (thirty-five percent) had taken Women's Studies courses. For those who had taken Women's Studies courses, all had taken three or more. (See Table 8 at page 97).

### Instruments

#### Attitudes Toward Christian Women Scale (Postovoit, 1990)

The Attitudes Toward Christian Women Scale (ACWS) is described by its author (Postovoit, 1990) as an initial effort toward developing an instrument for measuring Christian patriarchal beliefs and for comparing these beliefs with conservative, traditional female behavior and liberal, egalitarian female behavior.

The Attitudes Toward Christian Women Scale (ACWS) consists of 34 items, with 23 of these creating five subscales: Female physical and emotional independence; female submissiveness and guilt; female efficacy; martyrdom; and God's nature. No item was represented in more than one subscale so as to avoid item-overlap. Results

of correlating at  $p < .01$  with the summed score of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale-Short Form (AWS) (Spence, Helmrich, & Stapp, 1973) suggest that patriarchal attitudes of women are strongly related to their traditional or egalitarian societal role behavior, with the one exception of the subscale on female submissiveness and guilt. These results emphasize the importance of considering how individuals' religious interpretations affect their day-to-day routines and their expectations for themselves and for their relationships.

In her preliminary study, Postovoit (1990) used the ACWS and AWS (Spence, Helmreich, & Strapp, 1973). The AWS-Short Form was selected by Postovoit because it was shown to correlate .97 for college women and .96 for mothers of college students with the AWS (Spence et al., 1973). This self-administered summated rating scale consists of 25 statements taken from the AWS and is appropriate for subjects age 14 and older. The AWS-Short Form describes attitudes toward the role of women in society and includes such dimensions as sexual promiscuity, economic and intellectual leadership, and traditional sex roles. Statements of the ACWS describe patriarchal and egalitarian attitudes toward women and the ramifications those attitudes may have on a Christian woman's role functioning in the family, Church, and community. The various ACWS statements reflect the sentiments of Christian theologians past and present.

Postovoit's (1990) initial step was to establish a pool of statements drawn from a wide variety of historical and modern theological materials on Christian womanhood. This initial pool was then separately reviewed for content validity by the investigator and three doctoral student peers, all of whom have extensive

experience in the areas of theology of women and domestic violence. The 34 statements agreed upon were then reworded as necessary to obtain a counter-balanced six-point Likert scale. Further modification was done to obtain a readability level of "fairly easy" (Flesh, 1948 cited in Postovoit).

Next, the questionnaire was administered to two women judged "psychologically unsophisticated" and two women judged "psychologically sophisticated" by the investigator. After completing the questionnaire, each woman was interviewed by the investigator to determine how she interpreted the 34 statements presented. Items which were unclear were then clarified and restated in the questionnaire.

As this study was preliminary in nature and used a small number of subjects, a Pearson product-moment correlation between all the items was performed on the data from the 34-item ACWS to determine if subscales could be created, rather than using factor analysis. Using a minimum correlation of .6 between items, five subscales were created from the 23 remaining items: Female physical and emotional independence; female submissiveness and guilt; female efficacy; martyrdom and God's nature. No item was represented in more than one subscale so as to avoid item-overlap.

A correlation matrix representing the subject's total scores on the AWS-Short Form and the scores on the five ACWS subscales suggested that the relationships between the various components of patriarchal belief differ and that these beliefs may affect a woman's behaviors in society, as indicated by varied responses to the AWS-Short Form.



Except for Subscale 2: Female Submission and Guilt, all of the subscales of the ACWS correlated  $p < .01$  with the summed score of the AWS-Short Form. These results suggest that patriarchal attitudes of women are strongly related to their traditional or egalitarian societal role behavior. The results emphasize the importance of considering how individuals' religious interpretations affect their day-to-day routines and their expectations for themselves and for their relationships.

Postovoit (1990) used this scale to examine the relationship between the abuse of women and patriarchal beliefs. She stated that it may be helpful in determining attitudes of Christian organizations. She also felt that Christians interested in promoting equality for women may use the ACWS in their congregations and employment setting to help bring into the open what types of patriarchal beliefs exist so that these particular areas may be addressed and perhaps lead to changing practices.

For this research, in order to test attitudes on a greater number of Biblical passages and theological constructs, the number of items on the ACWS scale (1990) were doubled and the name changed to the Christian Women's Attitude Scale (CWAS). Items were constructed using Postovoit's (1990) design and procedure in order to test them for patriarchal and egalitarian attitudes. Five subscales were included, four being similar to Postovoit's (1990) Scale with one (Martyrdom) being discarded in favor of another on feminist attitudes toward sin, sex and pride. Internal consistency reliabilities for the constructed scales and the break down of items into the various scales and sub-scales is presented in Table 9 at the end of this chapter.

## The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Ellison, 1983)

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) measures both religious and existential well-being. The concept of spiritual well-being appears to involve a religious component and a social-psychological component. This is consistent with the theorizing of Moberg (1979), Blaikie and Kelsen (1979) and others. Moberg (1971) has conceptualized spiritual well-being as two-faceted, with both vertical and horizontal components. Ellison stated the vertical dimension refers to our sense of well-being in relation to God (Paloutzian & Ellison, Note 1). The horizontal dimension refers to a sense of life purpose and life satisfaction, with no reference to anything specifically religious. To have a sense of existential well-being is to know what to do and why, who (we) are, and where (we) belong (Blaikie & Kelsen, 1979, p. 137) in relation to ultimate concerns. Both dimensions involve transcendence, or a stepping back from and moving beyond what is. Because individuals function as integrated systems, it is expected that the two dimensions, while partially distinctive, would also affect each other and that there would be some statistical overlap (Paloutzian & Ellison, Note 1).

In order to more accurately conceptualize spiritual well-being, Ellison (1983) feels that it may not be the same thing as spiritual health. He sees this as freeing the researcher to consider the reported expressions of spiritual well-being as general indicators and helpful approximations of the underlying state. He also feels that spiritual well-being does not appear to be the same as spiritual maturity although one would expect a spiritually mature person to have a very positive sense of well-being.

A newborn Christian for example, may have a very positive sense of spiritual well-being but be very immature spiritually. Ellison also considers that spiritual well-being should be seen as a continuous variable rather than as dichotomous with no spiritual well-being present. It is not, then, a question of whether or not individuals have spiritual well-being, but rather how much spiritual well-being is present.

Without attempting to delve into specific theological issues or *a priori* standards of well-being which may vary from one religious belief or denomination to another, Paloutzian and Ellison (1983) have developed an instrument that provides a general measure of spiritual well-being. On a seven point Likert-like scale, it consisted of 20 items, ten which were designed to measure Religious Well-Being (RWB) and ten which were designed to measure Existential Well-Being (EWB). Scores of the two subscales are summed to provide an all-over measure of Spiritual Well-Being (SWB).

Factor analysis of the twenty items using the Varimax-rotation on data obtained from 206 students at three religiously-oriented colleges revealed that they clustered together essentially as expected. The first three eigenvalues emerging from the analysis were 7.136, 2.716, and 0.859. Two factors were retained. All of the religious items load on the Religious Well-Being (RWB) factor. The existential items appeared to load onto two subfactors, one connoting life direction and one related to life satisfaction. The correlation between the subscales has ranged from .62 ( $p < .001$ ) in two experiments with the initial 15 item version of the scale to .32 ( $p < .001$ ) for the revised scale. High correlations have also been found between



Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) and Religious Well-Being (RWB) ( $r = .90$ ) and Existential Well-Being (EWB) ( $r = .59$ ).

Test-retest reliability coefficients obtained from 100 student volunteers at the University of Idaho (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) were .93 (SWB), .96 (RWB) and .86 (EWB). Coefficient alphas, an index of internal consistency, were .89 (SWB), .87 (RWB) and .78 (EWB). The magnitude of these coefficients suggests that SWB has high reliability and internal consistency. With regard to validity, examination of the item content suggests good face validity. Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) scores have also correlated in predicted ways with other theoretically related scales as shown in Table 1 (Ellison, 1983). Spiritual Well-Being (SWB), Religious Well-Being (RWB), and Existential Well-Being (EWB) were all found to be negatively correlated with the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau & Ferguson, 1978) and positively with the Purpose in Life Test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969), Intrinsic Religious Orientation (Allport & Ross, 1967) and self-esteem (Campise, Ellison & Kinsman, Note 2).

Results show that human beings are multi-dimensional systems and several social-psychological factors were found to be related. See Table 2 (Campise, Ellison & Kinsman, Note 2). Self-esteem and spiritual well-being have been found to be positively associated. Positive relationships have also been found with such developmental background influences as how positively respondents see their relationship with their parents while growing up, the feeling of family togetherness during childhood years and one's perceived level of social competence. In each of these cases while all over Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) was significant, the amount of relationship with the subscales varied. Significantly negative relationships have been

found between Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) and such primary value orientations as individualism, success and personal freedom as shown in Table 3 (Campise, Ellison & Kinsman, Note 2). Living in a large city environment has been found to be associated with lower spiritual, religious and existential well-being (Paloutzian & Ellison, Note 3).

Spiritual well-being has been found to be related to several types of religious variables. "Born Again"/Evangelical Christians typically have more positive spiritual, religious and existential well-being than either "Ethical" Christians or non-Christians (Camp Ellison & Kinsman, Note 2; Ellison & Economos, Note 4; Ellison & Paloutzian, Note 5). In addition Paloutzian and Ellison found that spiritual well-being and intrinsic religious orientation were highly correlated ( $r[164] = .67$ ), mostly due to the Religious Well-Being (RWB) subscale ( $r[174] = .79, p < .001$ ). Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) and extrinsic religious orientation were less positively related ( $r[164] = .26, p < .001$ ).

Ellison & Economos (Note 4) have initial data which suggests there is a strong positive relationship between spiritual well-being and those religious beliefs and practices which focus on the affirmation and valuing of the believer ( $r[68] = .68, p < .001$ ). Specifically spiritual well-being was positively associated with those doctrinal beliefs ( $r[68] = .60, p < .001$ ), worship orientations ( $r[68] = .40, p < .001$ ) and devotional practices ( $r[68] = .60, p < .001$ ) which encourage a sense of personal acceptance by and intimate, positive communion with God and others in the Christian community.

Ellison and Economos (Note 4) also found that the average number of Sunday services attended each month was significantly correlated with spiritual well-being ( $r[68] = .35, p < .002$ ), though the average number of weekday meeting attended each month was not. Though the average number of times that one had devotions each week was not associated with well-being, they found the average amount of time spent per daily devotional period was significantly related to overall spiritual well-being ( $r[68] = .33, p < .01$ ).

Spiritual well-being was also positively related to the grounding of one's own positive self-evaluation in God's acceptance ( $r[68] = .60, p < .001$ ). This relationship held for both religious ( $r = .69$ ) and existential well-being ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ). It was also related to the feeling that God's evaluation was more important to the respondent than that of other people ( $r = .59, p < .001$ ).

The Spiritual Well-Being scale (SWB) has demonstrated initial validation and has related to other variables in the manner generally predicted. All of the Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) items deal with transcendent concerns, or those aspects of experience which involve meaning, ideals, faith, commitment, purpose in life and relationship to God. The researchers' initial conceptualization that spiritual well-being is concerned with and yet distinct from religious spirituality and existential well-being has been supported due to the fact that the scale related highly with such a measure as the Purpose in Life Test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969), especially with regard to existential well-being, and that intrinsic religious orientation (Allport & Ross, 1967) is also highly related to spiritual and religious well-being.



The consistent relationship between spiritual well-being and types of religious commitment was also supported in the researcher's initial conceptualization that those people with a more internalized and intimate relationship with God would not only have higher religious well-being but higher all-over spiritual well-being as well. This relationship was also supported by preliminary studies done on doctrinal, liturgical, devotional and community orientations indicating that those people with more intimate and positive relationships with both God and their Church have higher spiritual well-being.

The researchers (Ellison, 1983) also determined that several developmental background variables were related to spiritual well-being. This demonstrated their theory that human beings are multi-dimensional systems. Their findings suggest that childhood experiences with family and friends, at least as recollected, may set the stage for one's later sense of spiritual satisfaction in life.

The conceptualization of human beings in this manner and the view that the SWB scale offers a measure of quality of life, is also supported by the consistently positive relationship that has been observed with self-esteem measures and consistently negative relationship between spiritual well-being and loneliness.

This scale was used because of the researchers' claim that it correlates positively with self-esteem measures as well as with measures testing existential well-being and intrinsic religious orientation. Its usefulness in this research seems promising in determining the relationship between spiritual well-being and patriarchal/egalitarian attitudes regarding Biblical passages and theological constructs that define women's roles.

## Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Roid & Fitts, 1991)

The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, 1991 (TSCS) was developed to meet the need for a scale that would be simple for the respondent, widely applicable, and multidimensional in its description of self-concept. The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) consists of 100 self-descriptive statements that the respondent uses to portray his or her own self-picture. The scale is self-administered by either individuals or groups and can be completed in 10 to 20 minutes (average time about 13 minutes). It can be used with individuals aged 13 or older who can read at approximately a fourth-grade level or higher. The TSCS is applicable to the full range of psychological adjustment, from healthy, well-adjusted individuals to psychotic patients.

Only Form C (the Counseling Form), which provides scores for 14 basic scales and is used for healthy, well-adjusted individuals, was used.

### Nature and Meaning of the Scores

The Self-Criticism Scale. The Self-Criticism Scale is composed of 10 mildly derogatory statements or "common frailties" most people would admit to when responding candidly. An individual who denies most of these statements is being defensive and is making a deliberate effort to represent a favorable self-image. The Total Score is the single most important score on the TSCS. It reflects the overall level of self-esteem--whether or not the person likes themselves, feels they are of value and worth, has self-confidence, and acts accordingly. Individuals with low

Total Scores are doubtful about their own worth, see themselves as undesirable, often feel anxious, depressed, and unhappy, and have little self-confidence.

Rows and Columns. These scores derive directly from the 3 x 5 scheme of rows and columns that is found on the Score Sheet. These scores represent an internal frame of reference with which the individual describes herself or himself. The set of items is divided into two ways. First external frame of reference and second internal frame of reference on each item. The items are as follows: *Identity* items are the "what I am" items whereby the individual describes his or her basic identity, as self-perceived; *Self-Satisfaction* score is derived from those items on which the individual describes how satisfied she or he feels with the perceived self-image. In general, this score reflects the level of self-acceptance. *Behavior* score is calculated from those items that express "what I do" or "the way I act." This score measures the individual's perception of his or her own behavior or the way he or she functions; *Physical Self* score presents the individual's view of her or his body, state of health, physical appearance, skills, and sexuality; *Moral-Ethical Self* score describes the self from a moral-ethical frame of reference - examining moral worth, relationship to God, feelings of being a "good" or "bad" person, and satisfaction with one's religion or lack of it; *Personal Self* score reflects the individual's sense of personal worth, feeling of adequacy as a person, and self-evaluation of the personality apart from the body or relationships to others; *Family Self* score reflects the individual's feelings of adequacy, worth, and value as a family member. It refers to the individual's perception of self in relation to her or his immediate circle of



associates; *Social Self* score is another "self as perceived in relation to others" category, but it defines "others" in a more general way by reflecting the person's sense of adequacy and worth in social interaction with other people in general.

Specifically these items test for identity, self-satisfaction, behavior, physical self, moral-ethical self, personal self, family self and social self. The Variability Scores measure the amount of inconsistency from one area of self-perception to another. Distribution of Responses (DIST). This score summarizes the pattern of the individual's responses as distributed across the five available response options for each Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) item. It is also interpreted as a measure of still another aspect of self-perception: certainty about the way one sees oneself. A high score indicates that the respondent is very definite in what he or she says about herself or himself, while a low score reveals the opposite. Low scores are also found with people who are being defensive and guarded, and who avoid committing themselves by employing "3" (Partly False and Partly True) responses. Extreme scores on this variable are undesirable in either direction and are most often obtained from disturbed people.

### Psychometric Properties

Reliability/Internal Consistency. Nunnally (1968) reported a split-half reliability of .91 for the Total Score on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS). More recently, Stanwyck and Garrison (1982) reported on internal consistency estimate of .92 for the Total Score and .66 for Self-Criticism, based on a dichotomization of items. In addition, Stanwyck and Garrison conducted a Rasch

analysis (Rasch, 1980), and found that 82 of the 90 Total Score items (with dichotomization into True/False categories) met the criterion of fit to the model ( $t > 3.0$ ; see Wright & Stone, 1979). Thus, the responses to the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) items show an approximate consistency in the shape of their item characteristic curves in relation to a theoretical trait of general self-concept.

Tzeng, Maxey, Fortier, and Landis (1985) computed internal consistency estimates (alpha coefficients) on 90-, 30-, and 18-item subsets of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) on a clinical sample ( $n=132$ ) and two university student samples ( $n=132$  and  $138$ ). All coefficients were above .80 in all three samples. For the positively and negatively keyed items of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) (45 items in each subset), alphas ranged from .89 to .94 across the three samples.

Validity. The widespread use of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) in diverse counseling, educational, clinical, and medical setting has provided an accumulation of evidence for the validity of the scale as a measure of general self-concept. Construct-relevant evidence for the validity of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) as a measure of global construct of self-concept or self-esteem as well as a large number of factor analyses and other studies that explore the nature of the subscale dimensions of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) are discussed and additional information on content-relevant and criterion-relevant validity evidence for the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) is also included in Chapter 5 of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) Manual.

Several reasons led me to choose the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS). First, current theories of self-concept that have emerged can be divided into three

types: (a) general factor, (b) hierarchical, and (c) multiple factor. The authors (Roid & Fitts, 1991) claim that the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) has an empirically based connection with each of these recognized models of self-concept. The Total Score can be used as a measure of global self-concept or self-esteem. Secondly, the authors give evidence that there is a positive correlation between global self-concept or self-esteem and religious maturity. Marthai (1980) developed a study to measure religious maturity, which he defined as including religious identity, intrinsic motivation for religious matters, wholeness, and growth. This *Religious Index of Maturing Survey* correlated .38 with the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) Total Score, verifying the theoretically expected moderate relationship between the constructs ( $N = 216, p < .01$ ). Third, in addition, the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) has a Moral-Ethical Scale included in Rows and Columns. Although this correlation of .38 is relatively low, the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) was the only self-concept scale to include this dimension. Column B yields a moral-ethical self score--examining moral worth, relationship to God, feelings of being a "good" or "bad" person, and satisfaction with one's religion or lack of it. As this scale interacts with Row 1, 2 and 3 it will give evidence of Identity, Self-Satisfaction and Behavior in this particular dimension of the self-concept. In summary, these three reasons, the broad range of self-concept models represented, the religious maturity component and its interaction to a moral-ethical component all indicate that the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) is a promising choice to use in this study.



## Biblical Passages & Theological Constructs Scale (BPTCS) (Nielsen, 1994)

The Biblical Passages & Theological Constructs Scale (BPTCS) was developed to ascertain the level of knowledge participants had regarding the specific Biblical passages and theological constructs which were salient to the attitudes which correspond to the Christian Women's Attitude Scale. On a 4 point Likert-type scale, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they knew pertinent articles, books on Biblical passages on a range from "am not familiar with," "have heard of," "know somewhat," or "know very well."

The scale has 21 questions with additional space for participants to add any other articles and/or books on feminist theology, other than those cited, that they have read.

### Procedures

- A letter was written to the Deans of the following seminaries, Rectors of these parishes and Chaplains at these hospitals: Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA; Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, MA; Andover Newton Theological Seminary in Newton, MA; Union Theological Seminary in New York City; Berkeley Divinity School in New Haven, CT; The General Theological Seminary in New York City; Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA; to the Chaplain's at the Clinical Pastoral Education Programs of Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital both in

Boston, MA; and to the Rectors of each parish (Episcopal, Congregational and Methodist in the suburban Boston, MA area) explaining the research I would like to do and the importance of the information that I believed would accrue from the research. For each group, I offered to do a seminar presenting my finding. See Appendix A for a copy of this letter.

- A pilot test was conducted with four parishioners and four seminarians to see if the information packet was clear, to ascertain how the measures were received and to assess the amount of time that the administration of the measures takes. On the basis of the information gathered from the pilot testing, some necessary revisions were made; first, emphasis was placed on the fact that this was an anonymous and untimed protocol, second, wording was altered on items that were constructed beyond what Postovoit had done on her Attitudes of Christian Women's Scale. Effort was made to make certain that these items were both clear and would capture the meaning of the theological concept intended without leading the participant. Lastly, the format was edited to establish an ease of answering on the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC).
- A demographic analysis sheet for every subject which included age, denomination, marital status, occupation, sexual preference (optional), educational background, number of Biblical courses they had taken, as well as number of Women's Studies Courses they had taken. See Appendix B for a copy of the demographic analysis sheet.

- The participants were thanked by a letter which included a statement indicating that the results would be confidential and that if any participant should wish not to fill out the instruments or should wish to withdraw the information, they could do so without prejudice. There was a place in this statement for participants to check if they want an abstract of the data. One of the seminary Deans asked for a \$3.00 stipend which procedure was followed at each seminary. All participants received juice and cookies. See Appendix C for a copy of the letter.
- Participants were asked to fill out a comment sheet, if they chose to do so. See Appendix D for a copy of the comment sheet. A great deal of information was collected from these. The most important findings from these will be discussed in Chapter 4.

#### Internal Consistency Reliabilities (Coefficient Alphas)

Internal Consistency Reliabilities (Coefficient Alphas) for three of the four scales used in the study are presented in Table 9. Internal Consistency Reliabilities for the fourth scale (Tennessee Self-Concept Scale) were not computed here because these reliabilities have been computed by numerous other authors in many other studies. The seven Christian Women's Attitude Scales had Coefficient Alphas ranging from .48 to .79. The Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale have very high internal consistency (.96). High internal consistency reliabilities were also obtained for the Spiritual Well-Being Scales. They ranged from .78 to .89.



**Table 9****Internal Consistency Reliabilities (Coefficient Alphas)  
for Scales Used in the Study**

| <b>Scale</b>   | <b>Coefficient Alpha</b> |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Christian Women's Attitude Scale (CWAS)</b>                   |                          |
| Total Feminist   | .65                      |
| Total Patriarchal  | .79                      |
| Female Physical & Emotional Independence                         | .79                      |
| Female Submissiveness & Guilt                                    | .62                      |
| Female Efficacy  | .59                      |
| Inclusiveness of God's Nature                                    | .50                      |
| Feminist Attitudes Toward Sin, Sex and Pride                     | .48                      |
| <b>Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC)</b> | .96                      |
| <b>Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS)</b>                        |                          |
| Total Well-Being   | .89                      |
| Religious Well-Being   | .87                      |
| Existential Well-Being   | .78                      |

N = 156

## Analysis of Data

The background questionnaire and four scales of this study were first key punched and verified. Then an SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program was written to analyze the data. To protect individual identities, only group analysis of the data was performed.

For the demographic data, frequencies and percentages were computed separately for the Seminarians and Parishioners, as well as for the combined sample.

The five research questions (1, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b) and Additional Research Question 4 asked about the relationships among the four scales. For example, Research Question 1 asked how do Christian women's knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC) relate to their self-esteem as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS). To answer these first questions, Pearson Product-Moment correlations were computed and reported in Chapter 4.

Research Questions 5 and 6 asked about the relationships between the four sets of scales and number of women's studies courses taken (Question 5) and number of Bible courses taken (Question 6). For these questions Pearson Correlations were also computed and reported in the tables.

Additional Research Question 7 asked if there were differences between Parishioners or Seminarians on the four sets of scales. To make these comparisons, the independent samples t-test was used.

To assess statistical significance, the .05 level was used in all of the analyses.

## Implications and Relevance for Psychotherapists and Clergy

This is a preliminary empirical analysis of attitudes regarding women's role as implicitly or explicitly defined in Biblical and theological material from both a patriarchal and a feminist perspective. It is my hope that psychotherapists, counselors, clergy and seminary professors as well as all those responsible for the health and well-being of Christians will benefit by the outcome of this study. Since attitudes about women's appropriate roles in society are in flux, I believe it is necessary for psychotherapists and religious educators to present both a patriarchal and feminist analysis of salient Biblical passages and theological constructs which implicitly or explicitly speak to the role of women in the Christian community.

## Limitations of Study

Findings from this study can be generalized only to primarily white, Christian female main-line Protestant parishioners and seminarians living in the Northeast in principally middle-class to upper-class suburban and urban environments. The data is limited to attitudes not behaviors that has been collected on self-report instruments. A final limitation exists within the capacity of these instruments to measure these constructs and within the biases that the researcher may have.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter contains eight sections. Section 1 discusses the method used to analyze the data. Sections 2-4 present findings relevant to the three main research questions. Sections 5-8 present statistical analysis pertaining to additional questions 4, 5, 6, and 7.

#### Analysis of the Data

The data from the background questionnaire and four scales in this study was key-punched and verified, and then an SPSS program was written to analyze the combined data from both groups. No individual identities were used, only group analysis of the data was performed. To answer the research questions, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were computed. The final research question 7, asking the difference between the Parishioners and Seminarians on four sets of scales, used comparisons analyzed by the independent samples t-test. Statistical significance at the .05 level was used in all the analyses.

#### Research Question 1

**Research Question 1** asked how does Christian women's knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC) relate to their self-esteem as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)?

Correlations between the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC) and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) are displayed in Table 10. It should be remembered that the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC) assesses the degree to which a person is aware of a feminist analysis of the Bible in regard to women's role. From Table 10 it can be seen that there were two statistically significant positive correlation between the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC) and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS); Self-Satisfaction ( $r = .15, p < .05$ ) and Personal Self ( $r = .16, p < .05$ ). The positive correlation with both Self-Satisfaction and Personal Self indicates that those women who were high on awareness of feminist Biblical analysis tended to be high on feelings of satisfaction with their perceived self-image (Self-Satisfaction) and on feelings of adequacy as a person (Personal Self).

### Research Questions 2 and 3

**Research Question 2** asked how do Christian women's patriarchal and feminist attitudes as measured by the Christian Women's Attitude Scale (CWAS) relate to their knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC)?

The relevant correlations are displayed in Table 11. Statistically significant positive correlations were found between the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC) and the following Christian Women's Attitude Scale (CWAS): Total Feminist ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ), Female Efficacy ( $r = .29, p < .001$ ), Inclusiveness of God's Nature ( $r = .45, p < .001$ ) and Feminist Attitudes

**Table 10**

**Correlations Between Biblical Passages  
and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC)  
and Tennessee Self-Concept Scales (TSCS)  
of Combined Seminarians and Parishioners**

| <b>Tennessee Self-Concept Scale</b> | <b>Correlation with Biblical Passages<br/>and Theological Constructs Scale<br/>(r)</b> |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Self-Criticism                      | .11  |
| Total Positive                      | .04  |
| Identity                            | -.04   |
| Self-Satisfaction                   | .15*   |
| Behavior                            | -.03   |
| Physical Self                       | .07  |
| Moral-Ethical Self                  | -.03   |
| Personal Self                       | .16*   |
| Family Self                         | -.10   |
| Social Self                         | .06  |

\*  $p < .05$

Total N = 156



**Table 11**

**Correlations Between Biblical Passages  
and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC)  
and Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS)  
of Combined Seminarians and Parishioners**

| <b>Christian Women's Attitude Scale</b>         | <b>Correlation with Biblical<br/>Passages and Theological<br/>Constructs Scale (r)</b> |
|---|--|
| Total Feminist                                  | .38**  |
| Total Patriarchal                               | -.10   |
| Female Physical & Emotional Independence        | .05  |
| Female Submissiveness & Guilt                   | -.10   |
| Female Efficacy                                 | .29***   |
| Inclusiveness of God's Nature                   | .45***   |
| Feminist Attitudes Toward Sin, Sex and<br>Pride | .20**  |

\*\*  $p < .01$

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

Total N = 156

Toward Sin, Sex and Pride ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ). These positive correlations can all be interpreted in a similar manner. For example, the high correlation between the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC) and the Inclusiveness of God's Nature Scale shows those with high awareness of feminist Biblical analysis tended to see God's nature as inclusive of both feminine and masculine forms. Similarly, those who were high on awareness of feminist Biblical analysis tended to have positive attitudes toward women's equality and efficacy. Those high on Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC) also tended to have feminist attitudes toward sin, sex and pride.

**Research Question 3** asked how do Christian women's patriarchal and feminist attitudes as measured by the Christian Women's Attitude Scale (CWAS) relate to their self-esteem as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)?

Both positive and negative correlations relevant to this question are displayed in Table 12.

From the first column of Table 12, it can be seen that there were positive and statistically significant correlation between feminist attitudes and the following self-concept scales: Self-Satisfaction ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ), Moral-Ethical Self ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ), and Personal Self ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ). Thus women who were high on feminists attitudes tended to have high levels of perceived self-image (Self-Satisfaction), of satisfaction with their moral worth (Moral-Ethical Self) and sense of adequacy as persons (Personal Self).

The second column of Table 12 shows the correlations between patriarchal attitudes and the self-concept scales. An examination of these correlations reveal



**Table 12**

**Correlations Between Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)  
and Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS)  
of Combined Seminarians and Parishioners**

| Christian Women's Attitudes Scale (CWAS) (r) |          |            |                   |                  |          |                 |                     |
|--|----------|------------|-------------------|------------------|----------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Tennessee Self-Concept Scale                 | Feminist | Patriarch. | Indepen-<br>dence | Subm. &<br>Guilt | Efficacy | God's<br>Nature | Sin, Sex<br>& Pride |
| Self-Criticism                               | .05      | -.21**     | .21**             | -.12             | -.01     | .09             | .15*                |
| Total Positive                               | .11      | -.06       | .02               | -.05             | .13*     | -.00            | .07                 |
| Identity                                     | .02      | -.03       | -.01              | -.01             | .04      | -.01            | .03                 |
| Self-Satisfaction                            | .18*     | -.09       | .05               | -.08             | .18**    | .10             | .07                 |
| Behavior                                     | .06      | -.02       | .02               | .00              | .07      | -.11            | .06                 |
| Physical Self                                | .06      | -.03       | -.09              | -.06             | .10      | .03             | .08                 |
| Moral-Ethical Self                           | .19**    | -.12       | .11               | -.10             | .16*     | .10             | .06                 |
| Personal Self                                | .19**    | -.14*      | .10               | -.11             | .19**    | .02             | .07                 |
| Family Self                                  | -.01     | .06        | -.02              | .07              | .02      | -.07            | -.01                |
| Social Self                                  | .01      | .01        | -.03              | .06              | .03      | -.06            | .06                 |

Total N = 56

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01



significant negative relationships between Patriarchal Attitudes and Self-Criticism ( $r = -.21, p < .01$ ) and Personal Self ( $r = -.14, p < .05$ ). Therefore, women who were high on Patriarchal Attitudes tended to be low on their capacity for normal, healthy openness and for self-criticism (Self-Criticism) and low on a sense of personal self-worth (Personal Self).

From column three, it can be seen that one significant correlation was obtained, namely, the one between Female Physical and Emotional Independence and Self-Criticism ( $r = .21, p < .01$ ). From this finding, it can be noted that women who have a strong sense of physical and emotional independence tend to be candid in their openness and capacity for self-criticism.

There were no statistically significant correlations between attitudes of submissiveness and guilt and the Self-Concept Scale (column four).

An examination of the fifth column of the table reveals four statistically significant correlations between the Christian Women's Attitude Scale (CWAS) Female Efficacy Scale and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS). Total Positive ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ), Self-Satisfaction ( $r = .18, p < .01$ ), Moral-Ethical Self ( $r = .16, p < .05$ ) and Personal Self ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ). From these correlations, it is suggested that women who had a high degree of belief in the equality of women (Female Efficacy Scale) were likely to have high levels of overall self-esteem (Total Positive), satisfaction with their perceived self image (Self-Satisfaction), feelings of moral worth (Moral-Ethical Self) and personal worth (Personal Self).

There were no statistically significant correlations between the Inclusiveness of God's Nature Scale and any of the self-concept scales (column six).

From column seven, it can be seen that there was a statistically significant correlation between Sin, Sex and Pride Scale and Self-Criticism ( $r = .15, p < .05$ ). Thus, those women who are high in their ability for normal, healthy openness and capacity to be self-critical, tend to have positive attitudes toward their bodies, their beauty and their sense of worthiness (Sin, Sex and Pride).

#### Research Questions 4 and 5

**Research Question 4** asked how does Christian women's sense of spiritual well-being as measured by the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) relate to their knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC)?

The relevant correlations are presented in Table 13. Statistically significant correlations were obtained between the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC) and all three Spiritual Well-Being Scales: Spiritual Well-Being Total ( $r = .34, p < .001$ ), Existential Well-Being ( $r = .16, p < .05$ ) and Religious Well-Being ( $r = .42, p < .001$ ). These correlations can be interpreted as saying that women who have more knowledge of Biblical passages and theological constructs are likely to be higher on overall Spiritual Well-Being, Existential Well-Being and Religious Well-Being.

**Research Question 5** asked how do Christian women's sense of spiritual well-being as measured by the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) relate to their self-esteem as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)?

**Table 13**

**Correlations Between Biblical Passages  
and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC)  
and Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS)  
of Combined Seminarians and Parishioners**

| <b>1Spiritual Well-Being Scale</b> | <b>Correlation with Biblical Passages and<br/>Theological Constructs Scale (r)</b> |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Spiritual Well-Being Total         | .34***   |
| Existential Well-Being             | .16*   |
| Religious Well-Being               | .42***   |

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

Total N = 156



The relevant correlations are reported in Table 14. Positive statistical significant findings were obtained between almost all the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) and total Spiritual Well-Being and Existential Well-Being Scales. For example, there were high correlations between Personal Self and Spiritual Well-Being ( $r = .49, p < .001$ ), and Personal Self and Existential Well-Being ( $r = .58, p < .001$ ). Most of the correlation between the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) and Religious Well-Being Scale were positive. However, they tended to be smaller than those for Spiritual Well-Being, Total and Existential Well-Being. Three negative and somewhat anomalous correlations were obtained, namely the correlations between self-criticism and the three Spiritual Well-Being Scales.

#### Research Question 6

**Research Question 6** asked how do Christian women's patriarchal and feminist attitudes as measured by the Christian Women's Attitude Scale (CWAS) relate to their sense of spiritual well-being as measured by the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS)?

The relevant correlations are presented in Table 15. From the first column, statistically significant correlations were found between the Christian Women's Attitude Scale (CWAS) Total Feminist and the Total Spiritual Well-Being Scale ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ) and the Religious Well-Being Scale ( $r = .14, p < .05$ ). Thus, women who are high on feminist attitudes tend to have a high sense of spiritual and religious well-being.

**Table 14**

**Correlations Between Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS)  
and Tennessee Self-Concept Scales (TSCS)  
of Combined Seminarians and Parishioners**

| Tennessee Self-Concept Scale<br>(TSCS) | Correlations with Spiritual Well-Being Scale (r) |                           |                         |
|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|
|  | Spiritual<br>Well-Being Total                    | Existential<br>Well-Being | Religious<br>Well-Being |
| Self-Criticism                         | -.20**   | -.20**                    | -.16*                   |
| Total Positive                         | .41***   | .54***                    | .20**                   |
| Identity                               | .33***   | .46***                    | .13*                    |
| Self-Satisfaction                      | .44***   | .55***                    | .24**                   |
| Behavior                               | .32***   | .45***                    | .14*                    |
| Physical Self                          | .33***   | .47***                    | .14*                    |
| Moral-Ethical Self                     | .25***   | .34***                    | .11                     |
| Personal Self                          | .49***   | .58***                    | .29***                  |
| Family Self                            | .22**  | .34***                    | .06                     |
| Social Self                            | .31***   | .43***                    | .13*                    |

\* p < .05  
\*\* p < .01  
\*\*\* p < .001  
Total N = 156

**Table 15**

**Correlations Between Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS)  
and Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS)  
of Combined Seminarians and Parishioners**

| Christian Women's Attitudes Scale (CWAS) (r) |          |            |                 |                  |          |                 |                     |
|--|----------|------------|-----------------|------------------|----------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Spiritual Well-Being Scale                   | Feminist | Patriarch. | Indep-<br>dence | Subm. &<br>Guilt | Efficacy | God's<br>Nature | Sin, Sex<br>& Pride |
| Spiritual Well-Being Total                   | .13*     | .14*       | -.21**          | .06              | .20**    | .10             | .00                 |
| Existential Well-Being                       | .09      | .04        | -.12            | .02              | .19**    | .05             | .01                 |
| Religious Well-Being                         | .14*     | .19**      | -.23**          | .08              | .16*     | .12             | -.01                |

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

Total N = 156



From the second column, it can be seen that there are statistically significant correlations between Christian Women's Attitude Scale (CWAS), Total Patriarchal and the Spiritual Well-Being Scales, Total ( $r = .14, p < .05$ ) and the Religious Well-Being Scale ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ). From this finding, it can be inferred that women who are high on patriarchal attitudes also tend to have a high sense of spiritual and religious well-being.

The third column reveals a negative correlation between the Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS) Female Physical and Emotional Independence Scale and both Spiritual Well-Being (SWBS) ( $R = -.21, p < .01$ ) and Religious Well-Being Scales ( $r = -.23, p < .01$ ). Thus, women who were low on their attitudes regarding physical and emotional independence tended to be high on their sense of spiritual and religious well-being.

In the fifth column, three statistical significant correlations were obtained between the Christian Women's Attitude Scale (CWAS) Female Efficacy and Spiritual Well-Being Total ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ), Existential Well-Being ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ) and Religious Well-Being ( $r = .16, p < .05$ ). From this finding it can be noted that women seeing themselves as equals with men tended to have a high sense of spiritual, existential and religious well-being.

#### Research Question 7

**Research Question 7** asked how do the number of women's studies courses taken by the participants relate to all of the scales used in this study?

The results are displayed in Table 16. Statistically significant positive correlations were found between the number of women's studies courses and the following scales: The Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale ( $r = .47, p < .001$ ), the Self-Criticism Scale on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ) and four of the Christian Women's Attitude Scale. These (CWAS) scales were: Total Feminist ( $r = .15, p < .05$ ), Female Physical and Emotional Independence ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ), Female Efficacy ( $r = .16, p < .05$ ), and Inclusiveness of God's Nature ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ).

One significant negative correlation was obtained, namely the correlation between the number of women's studies courses taken and Total Patriarchal ( $r = -.15, p < .05$ ).

These correlations indicate that women who have taken more courses in women's studies tend to have more knowledge of Biblical passages and theological constructs that speak to the role of women. They also tended to have more openness and capacity for self-criticism (Self-Criticism), and have more feminist attitudes (Total Feminist), less patriarchal attitudes (Total Patriarchal), as well as a more highly developed sense of physical and emotional independence (Female Physical and Emotional Independence). Women who have taken more courses in women's studies also are more likely to be higher on female equality and efficacy (Female Efficacy) and high on their understanding of the inclusiveness of both feminine and masculine images of God (Inclusiveness of God's Nature).

## Research Question 8

**Research Question 8** asked how do the number of Bible courses taken by the participants relate to all of the scales used in this study?

The relevant correlations are shown in the second column of Table 16. Significant positive correlations were obtained for Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale ( $r = .59, p < .001$ ), and three of the Christian Women's Attitude Scales: Total Feminist ( $r = .15, p < .05$ ), Female Efficacy ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ), and Inclusiveness of God's Nature ( $r = .35, p < .01$ ). In addition, these were significant positive correlations, Total Spiritual Well-Being ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ), Existential Well-Being ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ) and Religious Well-Being ( $r = .39, p < .01$ ). These findings can be interpreted to mean that women who have taken more Biblical courses tend to have more knowledge of Biblical passages and theological constructs that speak to the role of women, have more feminist attitudes (Total Feminist), more attitudes of equality with men and more sense of female efficacy (Female Efficacy), and tend to have more knowledge of both feminine and masculine images of God (Inclusiveness of God's Nature).

It would appear that women who have taken more Biblical courses are more likely to have a higher sense of spiritual well-being (Total Well-Being), higher Existential Well-Being, as well as higher Religious Well-Being as measured by the instruments used in this study.



**Table 16**

**Correlations Between Number of Women's Studies Courses and Biblical Studies Courses Taken and Scales: Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC), Tennessee Self-Concept Scales (TSCS), Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS), and Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS) of Combined Seminarians and Parishioners**

| Scale  | Correlation with Number of Women's Studies Courses (r) | Correlation with Number of Bible Courses Taken |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
| <b>Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC)</b> | .47***   | .59***   |
| <b>Tennessee Self-Concept Scales (TSCS)</b>                      |  |  |
| Self-Criticism   | .23**  | -.03   |
| Total Positive   | -.01   | .06  |
| Identity   | -.10   | .01  |
| Self-Satisfaction  | .03  | .13  |
| Behavior   | .02  | -.03   |
| Physical Self  | .03  | .12  |
| Moral-Ethical Self   | .01  | .02  |
| Personal Self  | .01  | .05  |
| Family Self  | -.12   | -.04   |
| Social Self  | .05  | .05  |

continued next page

(Table 16 continued)

|   | Correlation<br>with Number<br>of Women's<br>Studies<br>Courses (r) | Correlation<br>with<br>Number of<br>Bible<br>Courses<br>Taken |
|---|--|---|
| Scale   |  |   |
| <b>Christian Women's Attitude Scales (CWAS)</b> |  |   |
| Total Feminist                                  | .15*   | .15*  |
| Total Patriarchal                               | -.15*  | -.04  |
| Female Physical & Emotional Independence        | .18*   | -.12  |
| Female Submissiveness & Guilt                   | -.07   | -.04  |
| Female Efficacy                                 | .16*   | .23**   |
| Inclusiveness of God's Nature                   | .18*   | .35**   |
| Feminist Attitudes Toward Sin, Sex, Pride       | .09  | .07   |
| <b>Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS)</b>       |  |   |
| Total Well-Being                                | -.04   | .33**   |
| Existential Well-Being                          | -.05   | .18*  |
| Religious Well-Being                            | -.02   | .39**   |

\*  $p < .05$ \*\*  $p < .01$ \*\*\*  $p < .001$ 

Total N = 156



## Research Question 9

**Research Question 9** asked are there differences between Parishioners and Seminarians on all of the scales used in this study?

The group means and t-tests comparing the two groups are displayed in Table 17. From the table it can be seen that Parishioners had a higher mean than Seminarians on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Family Self ( $t = 2.15, p < .03$ ). This finding can be interpreted to mean that Parishioners tend to have a higher sense of adequacy, worth and value as family members than do Seminarians.

Seminarians on the other hand, had a significantly higher mean than Parishioners on the Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale ( $t = 15.01, p < .0001$ ). Seminarians were also higher than Parishioners on the following Christian Women's Attitude Scales: Total Feminist ( $t = 3.49, p < .001$ ), Female Efficacy ( $t = 3.34, p < .001$ ) and Inclusiveness of God's Nature ( $t = 4.81, p < .0001$ ). In addition, Seminarians had significantly higher means than Parishioners on Total Spiritual Well-Being ( $t = 4.05, p < .0001$ ) and Religious Well-Being ( $t = 5.15, p < .0001$ ). From these results, we may conclude that Seminarians tend to have more knowledge of Biblical passages and theological constructs than Parishioners. Seminarians also tended to have more feminist attitudes (Total Feminist), more sense of equality and female efficacy (Female Efficacy) and more positive attitudes about the feminine and masculine qualities of God (Inclusiveness of God's Nature) than Parishioners. Finally, Seminarians tended to have a higher sense of spiritual well-being (Total) and religious well-being than do Parishioners.



**Table 17**

**Comparison of Parishioners and Seminarians on Scales: Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC), Tennessee Self-Concept Scales (TSCS), Christian Women's Attitudes Scales (CWAS), and Spiritual Well-Being Scales (SWBS)**

| Scale  | Group Mean<br>(SD)     |                       | t     | p       |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|-------|---------|
|  | Parishioners<br>(n=78) | Seminarians<br>(n=78) |       |         |
| <b>Biblical Passages and Theological Constructs Scale (BPTC)</b> | 47.7<br>(12.1)         | 76.6<br>(11.9)        | 15.01 | < .0001 |
| <b>Tennessee Self-Concept Scales (TSCS)</b>                      |                        |                       |       |         |
| Self-Criticism   | 50.7<br>( 9.4)         | 51.8<br>( 8.8)        | 0.76  | n.s.    |
| Total Positive   | 54.3<br>( 9.8)         | 52.8<br>( 9.6)        | 0.96  | n.s.    |
| Identity   | 51.6<br>(10.4)         | 49.0<br>( 9.9)        | 1.65  | n.s.    |
| Self-Satisfaction  | 56.8<br>( 9.8)         | 57.2<br>( 9.4)        | .24   | n.s.    |
| Behavior   | 51.9<br>( 8.8)         | 49.7<br>( 8.9)        | 1.53  | n.s.    |
| Physical Self  | 46.0<br>( 9.9)         | 46.4<br>(10.8)        | .25   | n.s.    |
| Moral-Ethical Self   | 57.8<br>( 9.3)         | 55.8<br>( 9.1)        | 1.30  | n.s.    |
| Personal Self  | 54.3<br>(10.1)         | 54.6<br>( 9.8)        | .18   | n.s.    |
| Family Self  | 53.9<br>( 9.3)         | 50.5<br>(10.2)        | 2.15  | < .03   |

continued next page

(Table 17 continued)

|   |                         | Group Mean<br>(SD)     |      |         |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|------|---------|
| Scale   | Parishioner<br>s (n=78) | Seminarian<br>s (n=78) | t    | p       |
| Social Self   | 54.9<br>(10.2)          | 54.4<br>(10.3)         | .33  | n.s.    |
| <b>Christian Women's<br/>Attitude Scales (CWAS)</b> |                         |                        |      |         |
| Total Feminist                                      | 29.2<br>( 2.9)          | 30.7<br>( 2.5)         | 3.49 | < .001  |
| Total Patriarchal                                   | 1.9<br>(2.6)            | 2.2<br>(2.9)           | .64  | n.s.    |
| Female Physical &<br>Emotional Independence         | 13.2<br>( 1.1)          | 12.8<br>( 1.9)         | 1.46 | n.s.    |
| Female Submissiveness &<br>Guilt                    | .87<br>(1.3)            | .85<br>(1.2)           | .06  | n.s.    |
| Female Efficacy                                     | 9.9<br>(1.3)            | 10.4<br>( 0.9)         | 3.49 | < .001  |
| Inclusiveness of God's<br>Nature                    | 3.1<br>(0.9)            | 3.7<br>(0.7)           | 4.81 | < .0001 |
| Feminist Attitudes Toward<br>Sin, Sex, Pride        | 9.4<br>(1.1)            | 9.5<br>(1.1)           | .81  | n.s.    |
| <b>Spiritual Well-Being Scales<br/>(SWBS)</b>       |                         |                        |      |         |
| Total Well-Being                                    | 94.7<br>(14.6)          | 103.6<br>( 12.8)       | 4.05 | < .0001 |
| Existential Well-Being                              | 47.4<br>( 7.3)          | 49.6<br>( 7.7)         | 1.76 | n.s.    |
| Religious Well-Being                                | 47.3<br>( 9.5)          | 54.1<br>( 6.6)         | 5.15 | < .0001 |



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain through the use of four different self-report inventories how knowledge of both feminist and patriarchal analysis of some Biblical passages and theological constructs correlate with self-esteem, spiritual well-being and feminist versus patriarchal attitudes regarding these passages and constructs.

As a theologian and a psychotherapist, I am particularly interested in religious women's self-esteem and how Biblical teachings regarding women's role interact with a large number of psychological disorders from which women are suffering. Since, for many, the Jewish-Christian teachings are a vital and powerful expression of Western culture's ultimate concerns, these teachings become an important organizing principle within our personality structures and profoundly affect our self-esteem. Because attitudes about men and women's appropriate and life-enhancing roles in society are in flux, I believe it is important to understand both a patriarchal and a feminist analysis of salient Biblical passages and theological constructs which implicitly or explicitly speak to the role of women in the Christian community.

Data from these questionnaires indicate that women with a feminist understanding tended to have higher self-esteem and higher spiritual well-being. In the light of these findings, it is my assumption that women's self-understanding and self-esteem will be related in a positive direction as they continue to alter their view



of themselves from a patriarchal position of being subordinate to men to that of being created and loved equally by God. I believe that these findings will be helpful to those interested in religious women's spiritual and psychological well-being.

### Major Findings

The major findings from the data were as follows:

- The data from Research Question 1 indicates that Christian women who have more knowledge of the feminist Biblical passages and theological constructs that I was measuring have a significantly higher self-esteem, particularly regarding their self-satisfaction and their personal self. These individuals describe how satisfied they feel with their perceived self-image and sense of self-acceptance. In addition, their sense of personal worth and feeling of adequacy as a person and self-evaluation of their personality apart from their body or relationships to others is significantly higher. We might say, therefore, that those Christian women who have a higher degree of knowledge of feminist analysis of these Biblical passages and theological constructs feel very satisfied with themselves as people.
- The data from Research Question 2 shows that the women who have more knowledge regarding feminist analysis of these Biblical passages and theological constructs also have more feminist attitudes regarding beliefs about the inclusiveness of God's nature in both feminine and masculine forms and more positive attitudes towards women's equality

and efficacy as well as more feminist attitudes toward sin, sex and pride.

- The findings from Research Question 3 show that those women who have more feminist attitudes regarding these Biblical passages and theological constructs tend to have higher levels of perceived self-image, of satisfaction with their moral worth and sense of adequacy as persons. Conversely, those women with a higher level of patriarchal attitudes, have a lower capacity for normal, healthy openness and self-criticism and a lower sense of personal self-worth. Another finding indicates that women who have a stronger sense of physical and emotional independence tend to be more candid in their openness and capacity for self-criticism. An additional finding concludes that women who have more belief in the equality of women are likely to have higher levels of all-over self-esteem, in addition to satisfaction with their perceived self-image, feelings of moral self-worth and personal self-worth. Lastly, we note that those women who are higher in their ability for normal, healthy openness and capacity to be self-critical tend to have more positive attitudes toward their bodies, their beauty, and their sense of worthiness.
- Findings from Research Question 4 indicate that women who have more feminist knowledge of Biblical passages and theological constructs are likely to have more all-over sense of spiritual well-being.

- The findings from Research Question 5 indicate that those women with a higher degree of self-concept and self-esteem, also have a higher degree of spiritual well-being, particularly in the existential area. While there is also more religious well-being among these women, it is smaller than the sense of total spiritual well-being and existential well-being.
- Findings from Research Question 6 report that women who have more feminist attitudes tend to have more sense of spiritual and religious well-being. It is interesting that women who are higher on patriarchal attitudes also have a higher sense of spiritual and religious well-being. In addition, it is found that women who were lower on their attitudes regarding physical and emotional independence tend to be higher on their sense of spiritual and religious well-being. Finally, we note that women seeing themselves as equals with men tend to have more sense of spiritual, existential and religious well-being.
- Findings from Research Question 7 can be interpreted to mean that women who have taken more courses in women's studies tend to have more knowledge of Biblical passages and theological constructs that speak to the role of women. In addition, they have more ability for normal, healthy openness and capacity for self-criticism and tend to have more feminist attitudes, less patriarchal attitudes, a more highly developed sense of physical and emotional independence, of equality



and female efficacy, and more understanding of the inclusiveness of both feminine and masculine images of God.

- Looking at the findings from Research Question 8, as expected we see that women who have taken more Biblical courses tend to have more knowledge of feminist Biblical passages and theological constructs as they relate to roles of women, they have more feminist attitudes, more attitudes of equality with men and a higher sense of female efficacy and tend to have more knowledge of both feminine and masculine images of God. In addition it appears that women who have taken more Biblical courses tend to have a higher sense of spiritual well-being, a higher sense of existential well-being as well as of religious well-being.
- Regarding findings on Research Question 9, which is a comparison between the group of parishioners and of seminarians, we find that parishioners tend to have a greater sense of adequacy, worth and value as family members than do seminarians. Seminarians tend to have more knowledge of Biblical passages and theological constructs than do parishioners. Seminarians also tend to have more feminist attitudes, more sense of equality and female efficacy and more positive attitudes about the feminine and masculine qualities of God than parishioners. Finally, seminarians tend to have more sense of spiritual well-being and religious well-being than do parishioners.

## Relationship Of Data To Previous Pertinent Literature

The remainder of this chapter contains three sections. The first discusses the findings and relates them to previous literature in this area. The second section discusses the implications of this study for counseling, for clergy and psychotherapists, as well as for curriculum in seminaries and discussion groups in parishes. The third section discusses directions for future research.

Since no other study of which I am aware has dealt with as many different variables as this study, it seems most profitable to go through the findings of this study and relate them to the various different areas that are already being researched in the literature.

### Relationship of Self-Esteem to Religion

The first area has to do with the relationship of self-esteem to religion. A number of researchers (Spilka (1989), Genia & Shaw (1991), and Maton, 1989) have reported findings on the positive relationship between religiosity and self-esteem. Spilka (1989), Genia & Shaw (1991), and Maton (1989) all agree that intrinsic religion, or that which encompasses religious sentiment which floods the whole life with motivations and meaning, enhances psychological well-being regarding depression as well as helping people in high levels of life-event stress. In this regard, the findings in this study are in agreement. Spiritual well-being, which is made up of both existential well-being, meaning that one knows what to do and why, who we are and where we belong in relationship to ultimate concerns, as well as religious well-

being, or one's sense of well-being in relationship to God, are positively linked to every category of self-concept, from a

- total positive score which reflects the all-over level of self-esteem, meaning an individual likes themselves, feels they are a person of value and worth, has self confidence and act accordingly to identity issues, (what I am), where the individual describes their basic identity as self-perceived, to
- self-satisfaction, meaning an individual describes how satisfied they feel with their perceived self-image as well as reflecting the level of self-acceptance, to
- behavior expressed in what I do or the way I act, i.e., the individual's perception of his or her own behavior or ways that they function, to
- physical self, meaning an individual's view of their body, state of health, physical appearance, skills and sexuality, to their
- moral worth, relationship to God, feelings of being a good or bad person, and satisfaction with one's religion or lack of it, to their
- personal self which reflects the individual's sense of personal worth, feelings of adequacy as a person and



self-evaluation of the personality apart from the body or relationships to others, to

- family self, which reflects the individual's feelings of adequacy, worth, and value as a family member or immediate circle of associates and
- social self, the self as perceived in relation to others in a more general way by reflecting the person's sense of adequacy and worth in social interactions with other people in general.

Here I would like to highlight an interesting finding relating to negative correlations with spiritual, existential and religious well-being in regard to self-criticism. It would suggest that people in this category have a normal, healthy openness and capacity for self-criticism which perhaps would be analogous to a true humility or a sense of honest appraisal of one's self. In trying to explain this finding, I would like to refer to Ellison's (1983) discussion on true humility as differentiated from pride and false humility. Ellison (1983) describes the basis for true humility, to know and accept one's strengths and weaknesses, to be open to both positive and negative feedback, therefore to accept an accurate appraisal of one's true self-worth. Ellison (1983) makes the point that true humility is based on an accurate and positive self-appraisal. Those who most deeply feel God's perfect love, are able to accept their imperfections more completely, acknowledge their sins and face themselves free from fear of rejection. In this light, those participants with more ability to be self-critical regarding their spiritual well-being would appear to have more true humility.

Some participants noted what Gartner (1983) and Ellison (1983) have pointed out: moral humility, self-evaluation and self-worth need to be included with God-centered items on self-esteem tests. For example, on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale a number of people had trouble with the secular point of view as opposed a Christian point of view. For instance, question 46, "I am not the person I would like to be." There were several comments about the fact that by giving a "true" answer to that, it is not because they are insecure about themselves, but because they know their shortcomings and their sinfulness, and they know that God is working in them to make them more like Christ. Several remarks on the comment sheet also were made about the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, indicating that it too did not take these inclusions into consideration. An example of this type of question is number 6 from the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, "I feel unsettled about my future." One participant wisely commented that unsettled is hard to define. She said that, "while I don't know my future, I do know that God has the best plan for me." Several others commented on question 16, " I feel that life is full of conflict and unhappiness." Their comments circled around realizing that conflict and unhappiness are not necessarily equal. One participant thoughtfully replied, "I feel life is full of conflict and unhappiness because we live in a fallen world, but my relationship with Jesus Christ helps me to overcome these difficulties." In summary, then, information from my participants on the Comment Sheets supports other research in regard to revisions necessary in self-esteem measures in order to capture more accurately a Christian perspective on self-concept.

## Self-Esteem and Feminist Verses Patriarchal Attitudes

Numerous researchers (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983; Long, 1986; J.B. Miller, 1976; Rivers, et al, 1979; Sanford & Donovan, 1984; Small, et al, 1980) have noted that the patriarchal structuring of an androcentric system places women in subordinate positions to men and devalues the unique gifts and talents of women and results in psychological symptoms of a wide range of self-esteem related issues. The data from this study tend to support their findings. Those women with patriarchal attitudes in this study tend to have a lower sense of personal self-worth, and more feelings of inadequacy in their self-evaluation. They also tend to have lower ability to be self-critical, or in other words, they have less normal, healthy openness and capacity for being self-critical, or in Ellison's (1983) terms, less true humility.

The data of this study supports that of several researchers (Morgan, 1987; Harrison, Guy & Lupfer, 1981; Zuckerman, 1980 as cited in Morgan, p. 303.) in a variety of ways. Morgan (1987) notes that past research shows higher self-esteem to be related to non-traditional attitudes toward women. Findings in this study regarding feminist attitudes (or what Morgan terms non-traditional attitudes) embrace many aspects of women's self-concept. A higher degree of feminist attitudes is positively related to how satisfied women feel with their perceived self-image and the level of their self-acceptance, as well as satisfaction with their moral worth, relationship to God, feelings of being good or bad and satisfaction with their religion or lack of it, as well as their sense of personal worth, feelings of personal adequacy as well as self-evaluation of their personalities apart from their body or relationships to others. In addition to this, it can be noted that women in this study who have a higher degree of



feminist attitudes also have a stronger sense of physical and emotional independence, tend to be more candid in their openness and capacity for self-criticism, as well as tend to have more positive attitudes toward their bodies, their beauty and their sense of worthiness.

When considering correlations between patriarchal attitudes of submissiveness and guilt and issues of self-esteem, this study produced no significant correlation. This finding agrees with Postovoi (1990) whose study indicates that this variable was not a predictor of either traditional or liberated female behavior in society. Thus, she says, a woman may be an uneducated homemaker or a well-educated professional and experience a similar belief that she is guilty and ought to be submissive to her husband. Even more significantly, these findings are similar to Postovoi's (1990) in regard to patriarchal socialization patterns and their positive correlation to low self-esteem.

### Spiritual Well-Being and Feminist Verses Patriarchal Attitudes

When considering findings from this study regarding spiritual well-being and its relationship to feminist and patriarchal attitudes, at first we see contradicting data. The first finding has to do with the fact that women who are higher on feminist attitudes tend to have a higher sense of spiritual and religious well-being. Also, and in addition, women seeing themselves as equal with men tend to have a higher sense of spiritual, existential and religious well-being. Secondly, however, we also see findings that women who are higher on patriarchal attitudes tend to have a higher sense of spiritual and religious well-being, as well as do women who are lower on

their attitudes regarding physical and emotional independence. Findings from both Morgan (1987) and Himmelstein (1986) support the second conclusion. Morgan (1987) studied the relation between religious orientation and gender related attitudes and behaviors in college senior women students from two eastern land-grant universities. Her findings reveal that as religious devoutness increases, gender-role attitudes become more traditional.

Likewise, Himmelstein (1986) determined that frequent church attendance was the most likely indicator to patriarchal belief more so than education, income, occupational status, class, age, residence, or most any other social trait. What seems most salient is the fact of religious involvement. Himmelstein (1986) speculates that his findings can be interpreted to indicate that in a patriarchally sanctioned religious culture many women may base their self-esteem on their protected role as wife and mother in the family even though it is a subordinate role to their husband's and son's because they fear the loss of the special right to be supported by men and fear being forced into a work world dominated by men and male values.

While, in this regard, my findings seem to both support and be at variance with Morgan's (1987) and Himmelstein's (1986), one possible explanation may be the difference between the terms "devoutness" and "spiritual well-being". Both Morgan (1987) and Himmelstein (1986) measured religious devoutness by how frequently respondents engaged in activities and experienced religious feelings. While this method would tend to measure the depth of religious commitment rather than merely church attendance level, it did not consider a respondent's feelings about existential well-being. This existential component was higher in this study's respondents who



had higher feminist attitudes and may serve to partially explain our different findings on this point. More important, perhaps, is the some eight to ten year lapse between Morgan's (1987) and Himmelstein's (1986) research and mine. An increase of feminist writings has occurred in that short space of time, greatly impacting the results of any research done in the 1990's.

### The Impact of Knowledge of Women's Studies and Feminist Theology on Women's Self-Esteem

Interesting also, but not so surprising, is the finding that the more courses in women's studies and in feminist Biblical analysis that women have taken, the stronger is their sense of self-esteem. These women have a normal, healthy openness and capacity for self-criticism, they tend to have more feminist attitudes, less patriarchal attitudes, a more highly developed sense of physical and emotional independence, of equality and efficacy and of understanding the inclusiveness of both feminine and masculine images of God. In particular, women who have taken more Biblical courses in feminist theology tend to have more sense of spiritual well-being, existential well-being, as well as more religious well-being. This point has great significance for teachers of religious education, in seminaries, in parishes and all educational institutions.

### Differences Between Seminarians and Parishioners

Finally, in comparing the two groups, parishioners with seminarians, several interesting findings come alive. Parishioners were significantly higher than seminarians in one area only: parishioners tend to have more sense of adequacy,



worth and value as family members than do seminarians. This finding is not very surprising when we look at the demographics of the group. In terms of occupation, twenty-eight percent of the parishioners are housewives while only one percent of seminarians are. Eighty-one percent of the parishioner were married, while only thirty-three percent of the seminarians are. This leaves nine percent single parishioners, and twelve percent separated or divorced, and fifty-four percent single while twelve percent were separated or divorced as seminarians. This could explain why there is more sense of adequacy, worth and value as family members among the parishioners than among the seminarians.

Seminarians, on the other hand, were significantly higher than parishioners in a number of areas. Not surprisingly, seminarians tend to have more knowledge of feminist Biblical analysis and more feminist attitudes, more sense of equality, and female efficacy, and different attitudes about feminine and masculine qualities of God than parishioners. Finally, seminarians tend to have more sense of spiritual well-being and religious well-being than do parishioners.

I think this finding can be explained because participants from the particular seminaries in my study have been made very aware of feminist verses patriarchal attitudes among Christian women. In my discussions with them, they are all extremely concerned about these attitudes within themselves as well as within parishioners in the parishes they intend to serve. While there is a vast difference between those who have taken Biblical courses in the parishioner group (sixty-eight percent), contrasted to one hundred percent of seminarians, there is also a vast difference in how many women's studies courses they have taken. Only fifteen

percent of parishioners have studied women's courses, while fifty-four percent of seminarians have. While we can not explain the difference in terms of educational levels, since it is rather similar between parishioners and seminarians in terms of higher education degree, we can look to an age difference. Eighty-nine percent of the seminarians fall within the ages of 20 and 50, with the highest group being between the ages of 20 and 30, while eighty-three percent of the parishioners fall between the ages of 40 and 70, with the highest group being between 40 and 50. Since women's studies and feminism in general, as well as Biblical analysis from a feminist perspective, are relatively new domains of study, I think this explanation seems quite logical. In addition to this information gap, another important dynamic to consider in explaining these differences is that all the women seminarians are entering a traditionally held bastion of male dominance in studying for Holy Orders. Some of the denominations of the women in my study are still not open to ordaining women. Assuredly all the women studying for Holy Orders are aware of the theological and cultural attitudes of discrimination that faces them if and when they decide to continue to pursue this vocational track.

### Recommended Changes in the Protocols

On the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, participants had a great deal of difficulty answering the double-negatives. I would like to look for another self-esteem scale that would not pose so many of these double-negatives. Comments also indicate that

the women in my sample seemed to have difficulty deciding who their family members are -- were they family of origin, or the family that they had created, or their community in which they lived which would be family of choice. When I was asked this question, I suggested that they make that determination depending on what definition was most significant to them. I would be helpful if this point could be clarified on Self Concept Scales.

On the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, there seemed to be a great deal of difficulty on the Likert-type scale with the categories of moderately agree and moderately disagree. One participant made a suggestion to use a scale that ranged from, Agree Strongly, Agree Somewhat, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree Somewhat, and Disagree Strongly. I think that would be much easier to understand. Another participant suggested that another category that would make it easier for her would be a continuum, Strongly Agree, Agree, Mildly Agree, Mildly Disagree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. This also seems to be a worthy suggestion.

On the Christian Women's Attitude Scale, it might be advisable to use a Likert-type scale there also, rather than just a "yes" and "no" answer in order to obtain some more differentiations between the two categories. Also in this scale definitions of "submission" and "discipline" might be useful as well as a definition of "equality" taking into consideration either "equal in function" or "equal in authority."

On the demographic sheet, several people suggested another category for marital status which would indicate that a person was in a committed relationship with another person who was not a married, domestic partner.



Implications of This Study for Seminary  
Professors, Clergy, Psychologists,  
Psychotherapists and Teachers of Religious Education

Significance for Seminary Professors,  
Clergy and Religion Educators

Seminary professors may find this study useful in urging them to develop their course work with a conscious eye to distinguishing between traditional and feminist analysis of Biblical and theological material with the view that women seminarians who know both positions may not only raise their own self-esteem but may be of greater service to their congregations in these times of changing attitudes about the roles of men and women. When both male and female clergy understand both perspectives and the implications for women's self-esteem as well as their spiritual well-being, they will become better prepared to handle liturgical, ecclesiastical, Biblical and pastoral concerns in the parish or whatever kind of work they choose. Those among them who are already solidly feminist in their belief system will also have an appreciation at a deeper level for parishioners who are going through the changes from a patriarchally based social structure of the Church, to a more egalitarian based Church organization and personal identity formation. Since theological reflection is always in the state of flux, it will become crucial for all clergy to be well aware of both a feminist and a patriarchal position so that they can be more knowledgeable about their own position as well as understand the rich diversity that has always been a part of church life and is taking the form of distinct changes on the feminist and patriarchal dichotomy.

Another crucial implication of this data for seminary professors is the advisability of holding courses of continuing education for clergy on these matters. Long and Heggen (1988) in their study of perceptions of what constitutes spiritual health specifically as viewed by the clergy, found that differential standards of spiritual health exist for men and women, just as Broverman et al, (1970) found that differential standards of mental health exist for men and women as perceived by mental health professionals. Their findings indicate that although substantial differences are seen between ideal spiritual health for adults and spiritual health for women, spiritual health for men was viewed as virtually identical to ideal spiritual health. The descriptor items on which clergy rated women very high were: "submissiveness in the home", "enjoys teaching children in Church", "has domestic skills", "gentle, soft spoken", "spouse makes decisions", "seeks advice from others", "comfortable following in Church", and "provides emotionality for the family". In contrast, the descriptor items on which clergy rated women very low were: "provides financially", "fair and just", "dominant in the home", "has marketable skills", "forceful", "makes decisions for spouse" and "dispassionate". Clergy holding those views of spiritual health for women, will be in conflict with many of their parishioners who are going through self development and spiritual enhancement in other areas of their lives. Continuing education on topics of feminism and self-esteem could aid clergy to broaden out their perspective. Courses in feminist theology and Biblical analysis, as well as women psychological development, could enable clergy to become more effective spiritual leaders. Clergy who already have a feminist perspective, could continue to stay in touch with current research as well as bring

resources back to the parish for study with the view of supporting and enabling the growth of women parishioner's self-esteem.

In response to many comments on the protocol as a whole, it seems as if it would be very helpful for clergy to bring materials into the parish for study by groups of women and also groups of women and men. A number of the general comments received regarding the passages used in this study shared rage and disgust over the female subordination in the Bible. Many commented on how uncomfortable it was to read these Biblical passages that are so negating to women's full experience; one said it made her squirm. Another said "reading all of St. Paul's comments makes me furious! It sets the context for almost two thousand years of attitudes of discrimination against women." Another woman commented on the fact that "as a high church person I am grateful that the sacraments mercifully blunt some of the awful sexism in the Bible". As both women and men continue to seek meaning of ultimate things, I see a need to revisit the study of these texts and theological concepts, that through the light of the new feminist Biblical analysis, the Biblical witness may be instrumental in guiding and shaping the evolving spiritual experience of many parishioners.

I want to note a particularly interesting finding regarding the ability of many women in my study to have a normal, healthy openness and capacity for self-criticism regarding their sense of self-concept. Just as Randour (1987) pointed out in her study of the on-going developing self in relationship to God, many participants reported on the comment sheets that it is very difficult for them to be in a relationship with God at this point and to feel happy about their sense of spiritual well-being. Many



realized that they are in a state of flux in terms of their relationship to the world and to God and are asking important and challenging questions about these relationships. It is also interesting that the findings demonstrate a higher sense of existential well-being than of religious well-being among the women in the sample when related to their self-concept. A possible explanation for this may be that the women in this study find a higher self-concept nourished and sustained in their lives beyond a religious context.

A number of women commented on the fact that they were in transition about these texts and really did not know where they were going with them, but they realized that they did not feel committed to believing many of these texts at this point in their personal journeys. Again, Randour's study (1987) describes the process of women in her sample challenging and developing who they were as a person, evolving their self-concept as spiritual beings. In this study one woman said she found this a very difficult questionnaire to fill out at this time because she is "struggling deeply with a lot of these issues right now and questioning everything about her relationship with God, her spiritual life, and being a woman". Yet another said "this was a soul searching questionnaire". As a seminarian she said she was very interested in having a greater knowledge of the Bible, yet there are so many negative ramifications on the self and society in the same Bible that also provides road signs to salvation and love. Another woman who is doing her doctorate in Theology and whose vocation is presumably to teach theology, pointed out that analyses on the Greek and Hebrew words is necessary since much of the interpretation of the language depends upon our ability to accurately translate it. This observation points

to an area of further work that could be considered, that is to discuss in women's groups some of the various linguistic approaches that feminists are taking to the material, linguistic as well as cultural. Phyllis Tribble's (1973) work on Genesis passages is a very good example of linguistic analysis that brings us into a very different reading of the Creation myths than the traditional androcentric interpretation.

Yet another interesting aspect for clergy to consider in parish life is to hold study groups on analysis of the Biblical readings for each Sunday. Study on these, discussing them from both a traditional and a feminist perspective will help both the study group members and the congregation to understand a variety of perspectives that are being held by theologians today. Not only would a broader theological perspective be helpful, but also the use of inclusive people and God language would be important. In this study, one woman commented on the fact that it makes her very angry to listen to the male-dominated language in the Biblical readings in Church each Sunday. Findings regarding women's belief in the inclusiveness of both masculine and feminine aspects of God are positively correlated with the number of women's studies and Biblical courses participants had taken. In my opinion to re-translate these passages into inclusive language would make an enormous change in parishioners' psychic structure of self-esteem and self-concept. With knowledge of feminism as a leading contributor to raising women's self-esteem, clergy also can be aware of empowering women and men to enter every aspect of ministry within the parish, for instance women to take leadership and decision-making roles and men to take nurturing and service related roles. Clergy who change their views on sex-role stereotyping and develop more androgynous qualities in their own personhood can

become important role models, encouraging androgynous self-concepts in parishioners rather than modeling patriarchal female and male sex-role stereotypes. Morgan's study (1987) indicates that self-esteem raises with gender-role preference of women becoming more non-traditional. Her findings are in alignment with the findings of this study.

### Significance for Psychologists and Psychotherapists

Data from this study has some important implications for both research and counseling by psychotherapists and psychologists. Researchers will be interested in the fact that Sanford and Donovan (1984) point out that the androcentric bias which permeates existing research and literature on self-esteem has hindered the validation of women's experience. Although several hundred studies of female subjects have been performed, those studies constitute only a small portion of the total research on self-esteem. Much of the clinical work on self-esteem are supposedly general studies but have been performed on male subjects and universal conclusions about human psychology, behavior and experience have been drawn from these studies. In addition, until recently women have played only a minor role as theorists in the social sciences. As numerous researchers have pointed out authors of the major theories of human development have been men (Belenky, et al, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Sanford & Donovan, 1984). I also regret that so little research has been conducted on women in these areas. My intention is that this study will contribute to enlarging the research base of data not only concerning women's attitudes on their self-esteem, but also their



spiritual well-being and feminist verses patriarchal attitudes regarding significant Biblical passages pertaining to women's lives.

Sanford & Donovan (1984) talk about sex-role stereotyped behaviors and characteristics resulting in a masculine identity in males and a feminine identity in females that has been considered a prerequisite to mental health by theorists of the socialization process (Banura, 1969; Mischel, 1966 cited in Long). Differential behaviors and characteristics have been endorsed in the sex-typing process with the more instrumental competency-oriented "masculine" traits consistently viewed as more positive and more valued than the expressive relationship-oriented "feminine" traits (Bassoff & Glass, 1979; Traynor & Deaux, 1975 cited in Long). In recent years, however, there has been much concern regarding the restrictive effect that traditional sex roles have had on mental health, particularly in women. "Masculinity" and "femininity" are no longer viewed as exclusive dimensions of a bipolar continuum and the concept of psychological "androgyny," the endorsing of both traditional masculine and feminine attributes has reorganized traditional perspectives on sex roles (Bem, 1974; Singer, 1976 cited in Long). The results of these research projects indicate that masculinity does indeed indicate to be a significant predictor of self-esteem and women describing themselves as more "feminine" reported more symptoms of psychological distress. Results from this study concur with those from these researchers as well as other researchers (Jones and Lamkey, 1995; Small, et al, 1980) insofar as they indicate that women who have more feminist attitudes or "masculine" traits about their self-concept and less traditional attitudes regarding "femininity" have more self-esteem.

Psychologists and psychotherapists, as well as psychiatrists, who are aware of findings like this regarding women's self-esteem can be very effective in terms of guiding women to become more "androgynous" and therefore more open to experiencing a full range of psychological expression and behaviors which will inevitably raise their sense of self-esteem. Regarding the role of these professionals with clients who are religiously oriented, certainly an understanding of the salient Biblical passages and theological constructs that both contribute to the spiritual well-being and strengthening of self-esteem, as well as those that are limiting would be very useful. Just as clergy will benefit from being aware of current psychological findings in the field of women's health, so psychologists and psychotherapists will benefit from being aware of current findings in Biblical and theological analysis that promote women's health and well-being.

### Significance for Educators

Another group to whom this information may be useful is people who are both religious and secular educators in any level of human development. Those who have relationships with parents of infants, young children or adolescents may find it helpful to know that the data from this study shows many areas of women's self-concept and spiritual well-being to be positively correlated with feminist study and feminist attitudes.

### Directions for Further Research

Several directions for further research are brought to mind from the findings of this study.

Other populations that might be interesting to research for a comparison study of the same material would be male parishioners and male seminarians. Even more productive might be a study of both male and female clergy as well as female and male psychotherapists.

Another fruitful area for further research would be in-depth interviews with women concerning their perceptions of these passages and theological constructs. Many women wrote comments about how much they enjoyed doing this study and felt illuminated struggling with these questions. They noted further that they had not brought these passages and constructs into conscious awareness before, and they thought that it was especially engaging to take time and energy to deal with these texts now.

One woman said she would find it illuminating and interesting to move beyond the meaning of the texts themselves into how women were living them out in Church, family and community life. She proposed a discussion on modern gender ethics. I agree with her that this would be a fascinating line to pursue. By using the Christian Women's Attitude Scale and the Biblical and Theological Constructs Scale with groups, one could get directly into this material in a discussion format that could be used with individuals or with groups. Since there are only "yes" and "no" answers, it sets up a heavy dichotomy and the discussion could center around not only how women are interpreting these texts in their lives but also a number of innuendoes that



could prove illuminating and would expose the texts more completely bringing to light subtle differences in attitudes. For example, the words "submission" and "discipline" caused a number of interesting comments and would need further exploration.

Finally, it seems that more research of this kind would be welcomed in this community of religiously aware people. I received many positive comments on the study. Characteristic of them was, "I am thrilled to learn of your research. I am looking forward to receiving your response concerning what you have learned".

Another woman said that it was nourishing to come upon the sensitivity to women, and ultimately to men, that this study contains and thanked me for having the vision to pursue this work. This study could be extended to a larger number of parishes and seminaries in other geographical areas of the country to compare results. Finally, this study might profitably be used with other than main line Protestants, for example, Roman Catholics, Fundamentalists, Charismatics, etc. for comparison purposes.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
LETTER TO DEANS, RECTORS AND CHAPLAINS

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear (Dean, Rector, Chaplain \_\_\_\_\_):

Thank you for asking \_\_\_\_\_ from your office to call me regarding my request for permission to do some of my research at (The School of Theology, your parish, hospital chaplaincy program). I would like to introduce myself and tell you further details about my work in this letter, and also to speak with you personally. I am The Reverend Barbara H. Nielsen, a clergywoman in the Episcopal Church, a psychotherapist in private practice in Boston and a doctoral candidate for a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology at The University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Presently, I am investigating the relationship between Biblical knowledge and how people feel about themselves. The particular kinds of data I am seeking have to do with self-esteem, patriarchal versus egalitarian attitudes, spiritual well-being and how these factors interact with a person's knowledge of selected Biblical passages and Christian theological constructs.

It is my feeling that, for many of us, the Jewish-Christian teachings are a vital and powerful expression of Western culture's ultimate concerns. As such these teachings are an important organizing principle within our personality structures. My interest in these matters was fueled first by my own 20 years as an adult in parish life, my seminary training and has continued to intrigue me as I have pursued my studies in psychology, and as I have gained insight from clients in my private counseling practice. Since attitudes about men and women's appropriate and life enhancing roles in society are in flux, I believe it is important to understand both a patriarchal and a feminist analysis of salient Biblical passages and theological constructs which implicitly or explicitly speak to the role of women in the Christian community.

My investigation is of a preliminary nature. So far, there has been a limited attempt to empirically study these issues. My work is being supervised by Dr. Ronald H. Fredrickson, Director of the Counseling Psychology Department at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. It is my hope that the data I collect will be of particular interest to seminary professors, clergy, psychologists and psychotherapists and teachers of religious education, as well as all who have an interest in the spiritual and psychological well-being of Christians.

I will be testing the following hypotheses:

1. Does Christian's women's knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passage and Theological



## APPENDIX A (continued)

Construct Questionnaire (BPTC) which relate to women's roles have a negative or positive effect on their self-esteem as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)?

2. Does Christian women's attitudes on patriarchal beliefs as compared to egalitarian beliefs as measured by the Attitudes Toward Christian Women Scale (ATCW) relate to their knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passage and Theological Construct (BPTC) Questionnaire and their self-esteem as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)?

3. Does Christian women's sense of spiritual well-being as measured by the Ellison Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) correlate with their knowledge of selected Biblical passages and theological constructs as measured by the Biblical Passage and Theological Construct Questionnaire (BPTC) and their self-esteem as measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)?

I would like your permission to administer the four questionnaires mentioned above to (women seminarians with at least one year of study; women parishioners, women seminarians in your chaplaincy training program). These questionnaires will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. The questions are as brief as possible. I, myself, will come to administer the questionnaires at a most convenient time. I need to administer them in a group in order to standardize procedures. Individuals will not be identified. All of the individual responses will be pooled. At your request, I am also including a copy of the letter which each participant will receive with their packet of questionnaires to secure their permission.

As I mentioned above, I would be very happy to discuss this matter with you further and to answer any questions you may have. I will call you next week to ask if we may schedule a meeting. Of course, I would be glad to present my results to you and/or to any class who might be interested.

I am most grateful to you for your consideration and help in this ground breaking study. Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely, in Christ,

The Rev. Barbara H. Nielsen

APPENDIX B  
DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET FOR PARISHIONERS AND SEMINARIANS

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Age   | Sex M/F |
| Occupation  |         |
| Denominational affiliation (Parish name and address)  |         |
| Educational background (College, Advanced Degrees, Number of grades beyond 12)  |         |
| Sexual Preference/Orientation<br>(Optional)   |         |
| Heterosexual/Homosexual/Bisexual  |         |
| Marital Status<br><br>Single<br>Married - 1st, 2nd, 3rd time<br>Separated<br>Divorced - 1st, 2nd, 3rd time<br>Widowed |         |

APPENDIX B (continued)

Have you taken any courses in the Bible? Yes/No

To the best of your recollection, list the names of the biblical courses you have taken, where and when they were taught.

Have you taken any courses in Women's Studies? Yes/No

To the best of your recollection, list the names of the women's study courses you have taken, where and when they were taught.



APPENDIX C  
LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Participant:

I am interested in doing research on the relationship between Biblical knowledge and how people feel about themselves. For many of us, the Jewish-Christian teachings are a vital and powerful expression of Western culture's ultimate concerns. As such these teachings are an important organizing principle within our personality structures. At this time in history, we are experiencing significant changes in men's and women's self-concepts and role definitions. As women and men search for meaningful self-images and relationships, the influence of the Bible can be paramount. I am hoping that my results may point to some troublesome as well as some helpful areas which concerned Christians may wish to pursue. In this regard, I expect that the results of my research may be useful to psychotherapists, psychologists, clergy, seminary professors, religious teachers, and all who are interested in the spiritual and psychological well-being of Christians.

This research is a preliminary investigation. It is being supervised by Dr. Ronald H. Fredrickson, Director of the Counseling Psychology Department of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

I would very much appreciate your taking 45 minutes of your time to complete the following questionnaires. Your individual responses will be held in confidence and will be pooled to make comparisons by groups. I will be happy to send you an abstract of my research findings. Please indicate at the bottom with your name and address if you wish to receive a copy of my abstract. If you do not wish to participate in this study, you may simply return the questionnaire to me.

Thank you very much for your participation.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Barbara H. Nielsen

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print clearly)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D  
COMMENT SHEET

COMMENTS

**If you wish, please comment on any aspect of this research or on the process of filling out this questionnaire. Your comments may be anonymous or you may sign your name. Thank you very much.**

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